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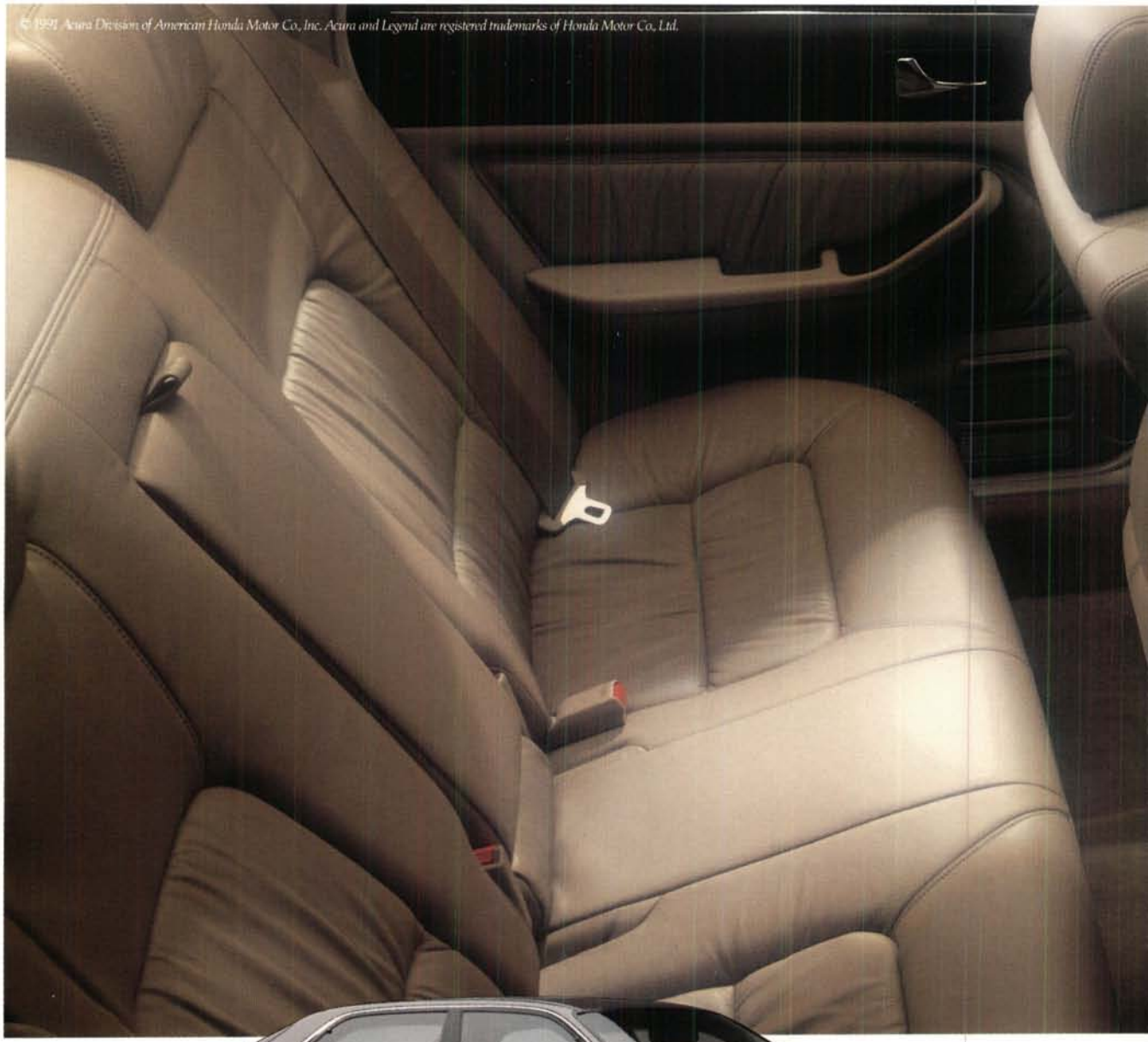

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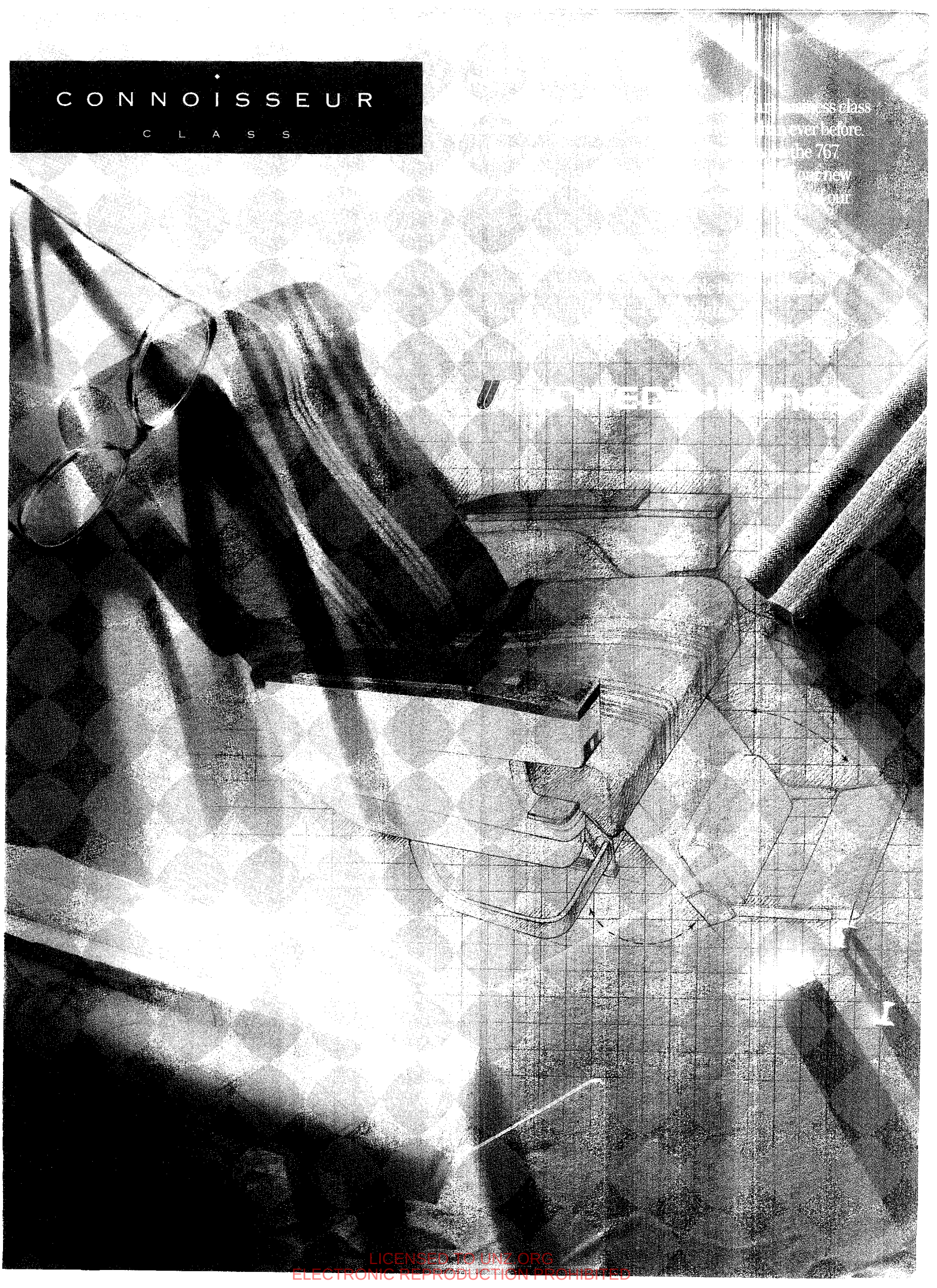

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

"As You Like It" has been the object of as many recent reshufflings as any play in the canon. Gender is the aspect most frequently jumbled. As if the play weren't already sexually askew enough, directors find the idea of casting it with an all-male ensemble impossible to resist. The justification for this tactic is rarely the obvious one—that boys were the Elizabethan theatre's "original instruments." Directors are stalking other quarry. It's no surprise that such experiments usually fail, for elasticity of gender, at least for the women, is doomed by the playwright's resolution.

Joanne Camp and Robin Leslie Brown, the decidedly distaff Roz and Celia in the Pearl Theatre Company's modest and amusing new production, nevertheless accept their doomed lot merrily. They may joust, or spurn advances, or make life miserable for their attendant clown, Touchstone, but they lack real critical fibre. They're bosomy—or, rather, as they take pains to indicate in Act I, unbosomy—chums giggling their way through school before graduating into the ranks of the married and submissive. Both of them are endearing; they provide cheery counterpoint to the burned-out melancholy of Jaques (Stuart Lerch) and the slight overzealousness of Orlando (Arnie Burton). Ms. Camp is also very moving, an unexpected quality in an actress whose distinctive alto voice calls forth memories of the googly young Tammy Grimes' register. When Rosalind's father, the Duke Senior, recognizes her at last, you may feel a tear welling. Or you may not: as played by Dan Daily, the elderly noble cloaks himself in fake sympathy. Even Auden thought the Duke "a bit of a humbug."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Bella, Belle of Byelorussia—A comedy by Jeffrey Essmann, with songs by Michael John LaChiusa. Directed by Christopher Ashley. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Boesman and Lena—Athol Fugard has directed this production of his 1969 play. Keith David, Tsepo Mokone, and Lynne Thigpen make up the cast. Previews begin Jan. 14. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

Crazy He Calls Me—Barry Miller portrays an attorney and Polly Draper an idealistic social worker in a play by Abraham Tetenbaum, which is set in the late thirties. Previews begin Jan. 14. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Invention for Fathers and Sons—A play by Alan Brody. Presented by the American Jewish Theatre. In previews. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Sight Unseen—A new play by Donald Margulies. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

Two Shakespearean Actors—Brian Bedford and Victor Garber star in Richard Nelson's comic drama about the rivalry between the nineteenth-century actors William Macready (a Brit) and Edwin Forrest (a Yank). Jack O'Brien directed. The show originated in England. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

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The Visit—Jane Alexander and Harris Yulin have the leads in the Roundabout's revival of a play by Friedrich Dürrenmatt (as adapted by Maurice Valency). Edwin Sherin directed. In previews. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

As You Like It—Joanne Camp is Rosalind in the Pearl Theatre Company's production of Shakespeare's play, directed by Anthony Cornish. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes Jan. 25.)

Beau Jest—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Bluebeard—The Ridiculous Theatrical Company revives Charles Ludlam's 1970 play. (Charles Ludlam, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Breaking Legs—The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Ronald Maccone, Nick Wyman, and, above all, Susan Giosa as the daughter who spins the plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Catskills on Broadway—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (12/23/91) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Cinderella—The Riverside Shakespeare Company presents a British pantomime version of the fairy tale. Directed by Laura Fine. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Dancing at Lughnasa—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dearly Departed—Good direction and an adorable cast of top-notch comedians make this rather slight and derivative black comedy a real upper. The play—by two actors here being first-time playwrights—is essentially an actor's piece; but if you can put up with a slow beginning and forgive a few lapses in taste the payoff is quite lovely. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes Jan. 12.)

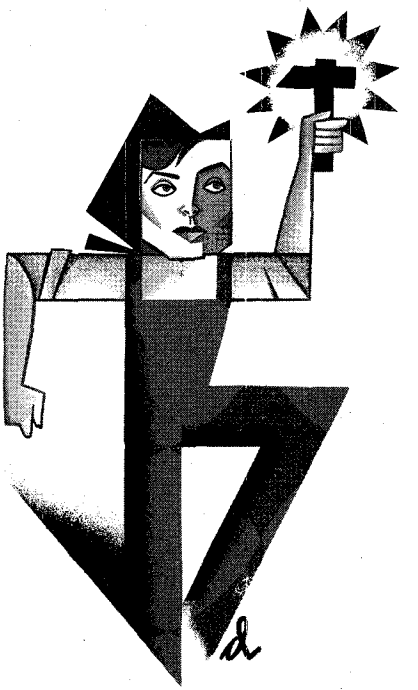
Five Very Live—An evening of five one-act plays, presented by the Atlantic Theatre Company. The title work is by David Van Matre; the other plays are "The Age of Pie," by Peter Hedges; "Sure Thing," by David Ives; "Call of the Wily E.," by Patrick Breen; and "Wonderful Party," by Howard Korder. (336 W. 20th St. 645-8755. Closes Jan. 18.)

Free Speech in America—Essayist Roger Rosenblatt's show. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes Jan. 19.)

From the Mississippi Delta—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Sybil Walker, and Jacqueline Williams, and the result is a lively and merry evening. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

I Won't Dance: Steve Ross Sings Fred Astaire—Mr. Ross in an "all-singing, all-playing, non-dancing" tribute. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. For information about tickets, call 688-7253.)

Lips Together, Teeth Apart—Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Hillary Bailey Smith, Jonathan Hadary, Roxanne Hart, and Anthony Heald; directed by John Tillinger. The show recently moved downtown; performances resume Jan. 9. (7/8/91) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)



Claire Beckman in "Bella, Belle of Byelorussia"

Mad Forest—This Caryl Churchill play, written after a "fact-finding" trip to post-Ceausescu Romania, was directed by Mark Wing-Davey (he formerly ran the Central School of Speech and Drama, in London), and the ensemble acting in it is so wonderful that the production is definitely worth seeing, even though the play may leave you feeling that Churchill's visit (which lasted only a few weeks) and her own abiding Marxism do not quite equip her to tackle the complexities of post-totalitarian Europe. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 302-6989. Closes Jan. 25.)

Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players—Presenting a limited engagement of **The Mikado**. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Closes Jan. 12.)

Pageant—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

Park Your Car in Harvard Yard—Jason Robards, white-bearded and padded to portliness, plays a retired teacher, and Judith Ivey is a former student who gets a job as his housekeeper, in Israel Horovitz's very funny, touching play, which is set in Gloucester, Massachusetts, over a year's time. Under Zoe Caldwell's expert direction, the performances are as near to perfection as makes no matter. (11/18/91) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Penn & Teller Rot in Hell—The dynamic duo are performing their repertoire of tricks Off Broadway. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Closes Jan. 19.)

Raft of the Medusa—An AIDS encounter group. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

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THE REAL LIVE BRADY BUNCH—Episodes from the acclaimed TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET—Gabriel Barré, Julee Cruise, Robert McCormick, and Louis Tucci are all appealing in this light-minded entertainment, a London import that won the Laurence Olivier Award for best musical in a year when it might have gone to "Miss Saigon" (whose producer's subsequent indignation led to the creation of a new award category). The show—a patchwork of beloved pop songs stitched together with Shakespeareana—has almost nothing to do with the cult movie it is based on, and still less to do with "The Tempest." Written and directed by Bob Carlton, it is more than anything else an occasion to laugh a bit and rock out a lot. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE SECRET GARDEN—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SONG OF SINGAPORE—A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. Another problem: on a busy night the seating arrangements here can be extremely cramped. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

TUBES—A work by Blue Man Group. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

WHAT ABOUT LUV?—Austin Pendleton, David Green, and Judy Kaye star in a revival of the musical version of Murray Schisgal's play "Luv." The book is by Jeffrey Sweet, the lyrics are by Susan Birkenhead, and the music is by Howard Marren. (York, 2 E. 90th St. 534-5366. Closes Jan. 19.)

WILLIE & ESTHER—Hugh Dane and Bern Nadette Stanis in a two-character play by James Graham Bronson. The work was first produced in Los Angeles, earlier this year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

LONG RUNS

AND THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND: THE KANDER & EBB MUSICAL: A musical revue, with Karen Ziémba, Joel Blum, Terry Burrell, Marcus Lovett, and Marin Mazzie. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.). . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. With Michael Rupert and Joel Higgins. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turned thirty-one in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** This revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the barbed lyrics. A holiday edition, "Forbidden Christmas," runs through Jan. 12. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. Cyd Charisse has recently joined the cast. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DANCE

"CARMELITA walked on incredibly high heels to the center of the room and sat down on a kitchen chair. She said to the pianist in her plain Western dancing-class voice, 'I'm ready, I guess.' And it began. The great experience. Not in Covent Garden during a Ballet Russe gala, when Kchessinska, Sokolova, and Danilova stood on the same stage, not in Pavlova's presence, not in the Bolshoi nor the Kirov, not in Graham's concerts, not in the most dazzling opera houses of the world have I experienced more."

This is the voice of Agnes de Mille. Her subject is a dancer named Carmelita Maracci. Don't worry if you've never heard the name before: except among the students Maracci (1911-1987) taught in her Los Angeles studio from the nineteen-forties through the nineteen-sixties (Miss de Mille among them), she is virtually unknown today. When we learned that her companion of fifty years, Lee Freeson, had arranged recently for Maracci's archive to be transferred to the Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, we hastened over there to see what the collection contained. We found two sorts of material: verbal and visual. The verbal group includes letters, nearly a thousand pages of autobiographical essays, and tapes of Maracci speaking. Nearly all this group is filled with anger, bitterness, and rage against various powers that be; it is obsessive and poisonous ("She was her own worst enemy," Mr. Freeson said). The visual group comprises Maracci's drawings, some astonishing photographs of her dancing, and a few film fragments. These last are mostly dark or blurred, and altogether yield only six or eight minutes of Carmelita Maracci in motion. Even so, you can see that she must have been one of the most interesting dancers on earth. From the films it is clear that Maracci could effect two of the illusions that people call "magic" in dancing: she could instantaneously switch the quality of her movement without altering its momentum, and she could, through movement alone, suggest non-dance images.

Perhaps Maracci's most enduring legacy is the dancing of her students, among whom were William Carter, Geraldine Chaplin, Cynthia Gregory, Jerome Robbins, and Christine Sarry. According to Mr. Freeson, Maracci herself had a special fondness for Allegra Kent, who studied with her as a child and who counted Maracci's classes in ballet and Spanish dancing as formative influences. "What Carmelita loved about Allegra was that, even as a child, she could see one thing in another," Mr. Freeson told us over the phone the other day. "When Allegra danced, it was like the Romantic ballerinas that you see in old lithographs, where they pose on the tip of a leaf. That wasn't the reality of what those ballerinas did; it was the fantasy that their dancing left in the minds of the audience. That fantasy is Allegra—in other words, pure theatre."

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 7 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "Valse Triste," "Ash," and "Symphony in C."... ¶ Jan. 8 at 8: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Concertino," "Bugaku," and "Symphony in C."... ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: "Serenade," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Valse-Fantaisie," and "The Four Seasons."... ¶ Jan. 10 at 8: "Jewels."... ¶ Jan. 11 at 2: "Mozartiana," "Poulenc Sonata," "Tarantella," and "Symphony in C."... ¶ Jan. 11 at 8: "Serenade," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Concertino," and "The Four Seasons."... ¶ Jan. 12 at 1: "Raymonda Variations," "Bugaku," and "The Four Seasons."... ¶ Jan. 12 at 7: "Serenade," "Poulenc Sonata," "Ash," and "Symphony in C."... ¶ Jan. 14 at 8: "Scotch Symphony," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "The Concert."... ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: "Jewels." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 23.)

"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT" DANCE FESTIVAL—Opening performances of a three-week engagement that will run through Jan. 26. Jan. 7 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 2: Randy Warshaw Dance Company.... ¶ Jan. 8 and Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 7:30: Dendy Dance.... ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: Elizabeth Streb Ringside.... ¶ Jan. 11 at 8: Peter Pucci Plus Dancers.... ¶ Jan. 14 at 8: Doug Varone and Dancers.... ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: Sally Silvers & Dancers. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

BYRON SUBER—Presenting "Three Roses and a Sacred Cow," a new full-length work that is based on a Conrad Aiken short story. (The

Self-portrait by Carmelita Maracci

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DANCE–Cont'd

Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 9-11 at 8:30 and Jan. 12 at 3.)

Beth Leonard—In "Un Baile de Frida," which was inspired by the art of Frida Kahlo and of Miriam Schapiro. (Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, 132 Greene St. Jan. 10 at 8. No tickets necessary.

Mary Abrams/Dean Moss—Abrams offers "You Look Like My Lunch" and "Totem" (with music composed and performed by Norman Salant), and Moss gives us "Dirt," which incorporates video and text. Presented by the Danspace Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Jan. 10-12 at 8:30. For reservations, call 529-2318.)

NIGHT LIFE

SHE was here, but we missed her. Sam Phillips opened up for Bruce Cockburn at Town Hall recently. We questioned every audience member we could find and learned this much about the pop singer's set: the first thing she said was "Ladies and gentlemen, Sam Phillips." There was, from that first moment, something weird and nervous about her stage presence. She stood absolutely still at the microphone, holding her arms at her sides and looking as if she'd been caught in oncoming headlights. When she took off her jacket, and some people, in a misguided show of support, began whistling, she whispered into the mike "Please don't do that, O.K.?" Despite everything, we've been assured that Phillips' voice sounded remarkably bright and that many of her songs, rearranged for one or two guitars, found a fortuitous new life.

We wouldn't have bothered to recount all of the above were it not for two things: Phillips has no definite plans to be back here anytime soon; and since her music seems to us to be a real gift to pop, we felt it would be a breach of journalistic faith not to wax enthusiastic about it a little. Phillips' first mainstream effort, "The Indescribable Wow" (1988), is full of disarmingly smart, catchy pop songs that give you a sort of contact high. We award it our highest rating, which is to say that if we knew you we would tape it for you. On the B-side, we would record Phillips' new album, "Cruel Inventions." This record isn't as eager to please as its predecessor was: it was built for endurance, not speed. Phillips has a thin, chilly voice. Many of her arrangements have a great depth of field: vocals and acoustic guitars are sharp and close, while groaning electric guitars, drum detonations, and other atmospherics resound in the distance. (The singer's producer and husband, T-Bone Burnett, plays some guitar on the new album, as does Elvis Costello.) As a lyricist, Phillips can be as oblique and brooding as Suzanne Vega, but you always get the basic message—that a relationship, or society in general, is going down the tubes. "Cruel Inventions" can take a while to enter your bloodstream but once it does it stays there.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—On Jan. 7, **David Staller** begins work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Mr. Staller's subjects here are "Noël and Cole," as in Coward and Porter. The late show on Fridays and Saturdays is "Americans Abroad," as in American composers living in London. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and hams hang over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. Brazilian singer **Alcione**—samba is her specialty—will provide the music here Jan. 7-10. She'll also play a second week's worth of shows beginning on Jan. 14 and, in between, will grace the stage of Town Hall, on Jan. 11. (Maucha Adnet fills in for her at the Ballroom that night.) Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen.

Alcione at the Ballroom

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—This northern restaurant-bar, an airy, two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery, is a shade too slick for Columbia students but just right for post-collegiate jazz fans. The name is taken from the long-gone midtown pleasure dome that featured Bird himself. The **Lee Konitz/Peggy Stern** quartet is here Jan. 10-11; the **Chip Jackson** quartet appears on Jan. 12; and the **Chris Carter** band comes in on Jan. 15. Music from nine. Dining.

Bitter End, 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—For the price of a drink or two, you can catch a handful of bands here any night of the week. (The cover charge is mostly a formality—walk along Bleecker Street and you're sure to have a free pass handed to you.) In the old days, as a mural behind the bar attests, the club hosted the likes of Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Joni Mitchell. Now you're not likely to recognize anyone onstage unless you went to high school with them. Music from eight Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. This month's **Dizzy Gillespie** jamboree, which finds the trumpeter performing in a variety of star-studded settings, is just warming up. The group in charge Jan. 7-12 will consist of **Kenny Barron, Bob Cranshaw, Elvin Jones, James Moody, Slide Hampton,** and **Jimmy Heath.** In unrelated news, **Mark Egan** performs, sans Dizzy, on Jan. 13. First set at nine. Dining.

Blue Willow, 644 Broadway, at Bleecker (673-6480)—This room is oddly Victorian for lower Broadway, a region almost exclusively devoted to the celebration of youth culture. You won't find any funky murals or drinks with funny names here, just marble walls, antique furnishings, and a ceiling that would be hard to hit with a baseball. It's an agreeable place for conversation, which is probably why the small jazz combos that set up here nightly often get relegated to being background music. Music from seven-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, pleasant room where they pack them in until someone says uncle. The walls and columns are basic black with some rainbow detailing here and there—the place looks a little like the outside of a van. If you end up without a seat, you can stand at the bar—finally a club where they don't force you to drink—and mull over photographs from great shows you've missed. The **Mamas and the Papas**, those stalwarts of oldies radio, will be performing here Jan. 10-11. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small, peach-walled storefront. Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or café au lait and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule per se, so it's often after the fact that one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping, waiting, and watching the door. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is now home to the **Modern Jazz Quartet.** The quartet, which has been doing its fastidious swinging for more than thirty years and which has over four hundred pieces in its repertoire, tends to play in big halls these days, so its occasional layovers in this intimate space are to be treasured. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Ronny Whyte** has begun a four-month stay, presiding at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Still standing. In the late seventies and early eighties, this dark cave (graffitied walls, a battered pool table, rest rooms for the intrepid only) was the hub of a thriving punk-music scene—Blondie, Talking Heads, the Ramones, and Television were regular attractions. Other clubs of the era have fizzled, but CB's perseveres, and young hopefuls continue to fill the stage nightly. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A recently inaugurated club that promises to "feature only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it affords local blues aficionados a chance to hear what they've been missing.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, but Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon-colored walls and abundant candlelight. The **Al Grey** sextet begins work on Jan. 14. Music after nine.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The cheery white downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the real clamor is indoors. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. Pop standards are sung/shouted, usually with altered, risqué lyrics; wisecracks are fired across the room; and everyone laughs too

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hard. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

EXSPO, 565 W. 23rd St. (229-1123)—Like those stores where you can buy groceries, rent videos, send faxes, and book a trip to Bermuda, this place offers something for everyone. It's a night club, a restaurant, and an art gallery. The space has an elegant, turn-of-the-century décor; the clientele is rock, metal, and glam. Live rock and roll on Mondays, swing and big bands on Fridays and Saturdays. Music starts at eleven. Dining.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. The fiery, Memphis-born saxophonist **GEORGE COLEMAN** is in swing for a couple of weeks as of Jan. 7. Coleman will be leading a quartet; his bandmates will vary. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

FLANNERY'S, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—Formerly a dive bar called McCarthy's, this two-floor establishment looks as if it had been dynamited and rebuilt from the rubble up. On the ground floor is a well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features—pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports—and a few of the near-classics: a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis. Downstairs is a low-ceilinged space that looks like a rec room; on weekends (from eleven) and Tuesdays (from nine) it's home to an enlightened mixture of garage-rock, rockabilly, surf-punk, and psychedelic-rock bands.

J'S, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—An Upper West Side jazz room, one steep flight up from the hurly-burly. Jazz people are on the premises nightly except Sundays, when a jukebox stocked with sixties rock and soul lights up. Music from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

JUDYS', 49 W. 44th St. (764-8930)—An intimate, burgundy-walled *boîte* attached to the Iroquois Hotel. In the front room, which is decorated with photos of famous Judys—and of a famous daughter of a famous Judy—a pianist keeps the happy-hour barbirds occupied. In the dining room, vocalists work out from nine Mondays through Thursdays, and at nine and eleven Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker's is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. **JUNIOR MANCE** plays solo Jan. 8-9, and with **MARTY RIVERA** Jan. 10-11. Music from nine-forty-five.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—It's named for its Texas décor, but perhaps a more apt name would be the Second Chance, since so many lost, forgotten, or faded rockers turn up here. But the club's busy schedule includes a variety of newer acts, too. Music after nine. Dining.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—This blues bar stands apart from the Upper East Side's usual array of singles bars, and has become a big draw for the neighborhood's army of post-collegiates. The neon beer signs, Manny's caps, and funky drink concoctions lend the place a frat-house aura, but don't let that put you off: this long, dark, brick-walled room is a good spot to catch blues artists both major and minor. Jan. 9 belongs to the Jim Thackery Band; Jan. 10-11 are in the hands of the Bill Perry Blues Band. Sets from nine-fifteen except on Sundays, when shows begin at eight.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. Shows at ten on Thursdays, at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays, and at nine other nights.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green green carpet, lime-green leather banquettes—has more of a country-club feel. The duo of singer-and-pianist Lynne Jackson and singer-and-bassist Mike Palter begin a run on Jan. 7. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Not to be confused with its richer cousin, the Rainbow Room, which is just down the hall. There, you'll find expansive Art Deco glitter; here, intimate nineties glitter. The performers, with their backs to the window, have to compete with a view of the Hudson, the George Washington Bridge, and beyond. Singer-pianist **BILLY STRITCH**—formerly of Montgomery, Plant, and Stritch—is going it alone here for the next three weeks or so. Stritch has just released his first solo record, a collection of pop and jazz songs by Cole Porter, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Michele Brourman, among others. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Show times vary.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This decaying theatre was once the famous Studio 54, where the late Steve Rubell's henchmen helped popularize the policy of turning away the unbeautiful. Now it's the home of one of the city's biggest, oldest, and loudest rock clubs, which was formerly housed in a decaying ballroom in the East Village. Canada's greatest heartland rocker, **BRYAN ADAMS,** brings his show to town on Jan. 10. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

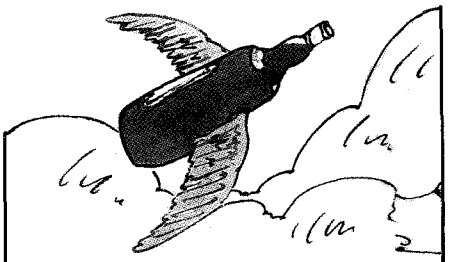
SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut decorated with a fruit-and-bamboo motif and dedicated to such things as calypso, reggae, and bossa nova. S.O.B.'s dance floor is always jumping with Rastas and N.Y.U. students, and there's always someone on stage shouting "Put your hands in the air!" **MAX ROACH** will be here Jan. 8-9. Closed Sundays. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. Pianist **MC COY TYNER** leads a trio—the other two thirds are Avery Sharpe and Aaron Scott—as of Jan. 7. Tyner's playing alternates seamlessly from the thunderous and showy to the lyrical and understated, and his bandmates are with him every step of the way. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." A quartet led by trumpeter **DANNY MOORE** plays Jan. 7-12; guitarist **MUNDELL LOWE'S** foursome begins on Jan. 14. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. Shows from ten.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. The piano-bass-and-vibes trio of Geoff Keezer, James Genus, and Steve Nelson performs Jan. 6-11; pianist Hilton Ruiz and bassist Jimmy Rowser move in for a week beginning on Jan. 13. Music from eight.



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EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

"LOCK the door," the young saleswoman called to the cashier as the last, barely smiling customer headed out into the darkness of Columbus Avenue. "It's only seven o'clock, and I feel like I'm back checking coats at the Tunnel." "You work tomorrow?" another saleswoman asked her. "Yeah. I'm going home, taking a bubble bath, and crawling into bed," she replied. "You're not going out? It's Saturday. C'mon. I'm going to some Christmas parties. Come with me." "Nope. Don't want to. Everyone's acting weird. I'm glad I'm stuck in here. Something's strange out there."

Between the after-theatre traffic and those trying to avoid the tree in Rockefeller Center, there was nothing else to do in a cab in gridlocked Times Square but read the headline flashing across the *Newsday* sign—news of seventy thousand workers being let go by General Motors. "Some Christmas, huh?" said the cabbie. "I never thought I'd think of this as a great job, but any job these days is a great job. I'm glad Bush finally admitted it's a recession. Wonder how long he's going to wait before he finally admits it's a depression."

A family was leaving the Coronet Theatre after an early-evening screening of "Hook," which depicts Peter Pan as having grown up to become a corporate raider and a rotten father and which barely acknowledges the murder of one of the Lost Boys. "How come they didn't sing 'I Won't Grow Up,' like they do in the show?" asked the eldest child, referring to the staged musical that has just closed on Broadway. "Because this is a different version of 'Peter Pan,'" answered his father. "I'm not going to grow up," said the son. "Don't talk like that," said his father. "Why shouldn't I?" snapped the son. "I have more fun than you do. You don't have fun." "You can't always have fun," said the dad; his wife looked at him blankly. "There are other things just as important as having fun." "Like what?" asked the son. "Damn it, you can never get a cab on this corner," said the father to no one in particular.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"The Christmas Spectacular"—Final performances of Radio City Music Hall's annual Yuletide dancearama—with the Rockettes, of course. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777. Through Jan. 7.)

"Antagony"—A new performance piece by Heather Woodbury. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. Jan. 9-10 at 8 and Jan. 11 at 7 and 9. For information about tickets, call 969-0614. Through Jan. 18.)

"Book of Job"—A new work by Elizabeth Swados in which Job is, literally, a clown. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. Jan. 9-11 and Jan. 15 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 3. For information about tickets, call 219-1160. Through Feb. 2.)

"4 Women Snuff 1,000 Points of Light"—A play by Susan Young, with Gail Freund, based loosely on Peggy Noonan's book "What I Saw at the Revolution." Annie Iobst is the curtain-raiser. (Wow Café, 59 E. 4th St. 460-8067. Jan. 10-11 at 9. Through Jan. 25.)

P.S. 122—Jan. 9-12 at 8: Terry Galloway in "Lardo Weeping." Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ Jan. 9-12 at 9: The Rhythm Technicians. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

ALL the press surrounding Art Spiegelman's two-part "Maus" saga has twice got us feeling lukewarm about the prospect of reading the books. The first time was in 1986, when the first volume of "A Survivor's Tale" was published, and it happened again this fall with the appearance of the second volume. While we were quite convinced that this comic-strip telling of the story of the Spiegelman family's experiences before, during, and after the Second World War would prove to be brilliantly perverse, or perversely brilliant, the whole thing also made us sigh a giant "oy":

—An epic about the Holocaust in comix form. (Oy.)

—Jewish mice persecuted by Nazi cats. (Oy.)

—A protagonist, the artist's father, who survives Auschwitz only to become a miserly, bigoted, mistrustful metropolitan-area Jewish Archie Bunker. (Oy.)

—A sensitive and alienated son's amends-cum-vengeance. (Oy.)

And the many reviewers' cruel invocations of high moral theory—Adorno, et al.—didn't help.

We are therefore grateful to the Museum of Modern Art for presenting Spiegelman's "Maus" tale in its "Projects" room (through January 28). This exhibition caused our cool ambivalence to turn red hot, and now we must have the books. The initial effect of this densely crowded installation of storyboards, outtakes, digressions, and source materials is of an especially volatile family argument exploding right in your head. Like all traumatic dramas, this one was deeply upsetting but cathartic as well.

Here are a few things that were especially upsetting:

—that the triangular mouse heads seem to be abstractions of the Jewish star itself;

—that Vladek, the Auschwitz survivor, is in most ways the classic pre- as well as post-Holocaust anti-Semitic caricature;

—that in a Maus world personal nobility may or may not emerge under extreme duress, but that even if it does, chances are it won't last.

And cathartic:

—All of the above.

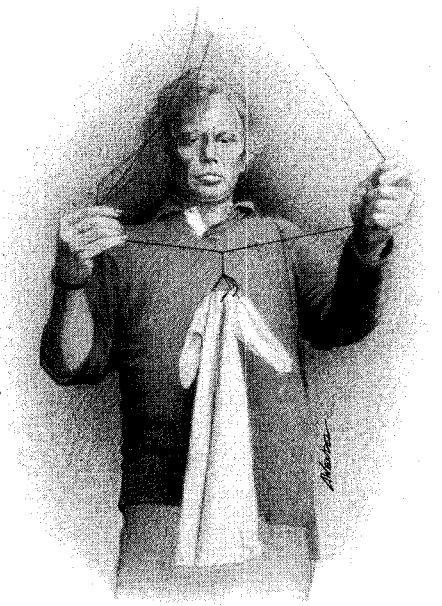
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The exhibition of East Asian lacquer from the collection of Florence and Herbert Irving may be the most impeccably installed show of the year. The slaty shades of gray on the walls and the pin-spot lights positioned above the vitrines brilliantly set off the already vivid array of red and black boxes, lap desks, *sake* bottles, and such, some of which are inlaid with pearly abalone and gold. There is no fuss here, just punch. Through Feb. 23. . . . ¶ A group of Alpine landscape sketches and local genre scenes by John Singer Sargent, made during a youthful jaunt through the Bernese Oberland, in 1870. Through March 22. . . . ¶ A retrospective of the works of Stuart Davis (1892-1964), including a hundred and seventy-five paintings, murals, watercolors, and drawings. Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Seurat." A crisply efficient and compartmentalized exhibition of paintings by the short-lived Neo-Impressionist, on the centenary of his death. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "Neo-Impressionism: The Friends and Followers of Georges Seurat," best taken as a kind of appetizer before the main course, consists of eighty-eight paintings, drawings, and watercolors, by Paul Signac, Camille Pissarro, Henri Matisse, and many others. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ The redesigned and renovated Arms and Armor galleries are open, and jammed to the hilt. The central Equestrian Court is still here, regally appointed, and it is now surrounded by eight new displays of Japanese, European, Islamic, and American weaponry and armor. . . . ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent." The Eilenberg collection, from which this show has been selected, is not particularly comprehensive nor focussed on grand masterpieces, but it does sparkle in many unexpected ways. From India come plenty of treasures, such as a prancing mythical "leogryph"; from a southern province of Thailand comes an early and glorious carving of Avalokiteshvara; and from Indonesia comes a group of bronze sculptures that many consider to be the finest privately assembled collection of such material in the world. . . . ¶ Three new permanent galleries are home to more than four hundred nineteenth-century European sculptures and decorative objects. . . . ¶ Candelabras, snuff boxes, and hotel façades are just some of the subject matters depicted in a show of eighteenth-century French drawings. Through March 15. . . . NOTE: The museum's Christmas tree and eighteenth-century crèche can be seen through Jan. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—An exhibition of works by Art Spiegelman. Part of the museum's "Projects" series. Through Jan. 28. . . . ¶ "Word 2 My Mother," a video installation by Tony Cokes. Through Jan. 19. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until May, 1992.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Celebrating Calder." Alexander Calder (1898-1976) was wonderfully inventive, and this show, which draws primarily from the museum's excellent collection of the artist's work, is a fine illustration of



Dennis Oppenheim

his breadth and depth. It begins with his delightful toylike creations—a double cat carved from a long, skinny cylinder of wood; a tiny elephant and horse made of crudely joined sheets of brass; the artist's signature wire sculptures, or, more accurately, drawings in space; and his consummate early creation, "Calder's Circus." Once Calder decided to be a "serious" sculptor, in the early thirties, he became a sponge, soaking up the work of many artists around him, learning their lessons and merging these with his own unique style. Up through the forties the

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exhibition is first-rate. Once it enters the era of the stabile, it slackens a bit. This may reflect the work itself, but it is also likely a reminder that, even in a stripped-down form, Calder's achievements cannot easily be condensed. Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ Seventy multimedia works, from 1971 to the present, by Alexis Smith. Through March 1. . . . ¶ "Variations on Themes," a show of serial works in various graphic mediums, by, among others, Terry Winters, Dennis Adams, Kiki Smith, and Jasper Johns. Through March 15. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts.". . . ¶ A show of contemporary Native American works, including ceramics, elk-horn carvings, and Pomo baskets. Through Jan. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Various museums have been sharply attacked in recent years for participating in the colonialist destruction of native cultures—desecrating hallowed grounds and seizing sacred objects for aesthetic delectation. As if to defend its own history, this institution has chosen to show off the grand sculptural achievements of the Kwakiutl, of the Pacific Northwest, by documenting the potlatch, a lavish ritualistic display of wealth and power—the most important ritual in Kwakiutl culture, and one outlawed by the Canadian government. The stylized costumes of bees, birds, and grizzlies—some displayed in vintage films of rituals—vividly communicate the Kwakiutl's profound connections with the spirit world. Among the most spectacular items are the carved dishes used in the ritual feast. Several, called *dzunuk'was*, are bowls in the form of the recumbent "wild woman" of Kwakiutl myth. They are up to sixteen feet long and have other carved bowls within them that correspond to various anatomical parts. (The chief eats from the head.) Through Feb. 23. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway—"Artists of Conscience: 16 Years of Social and Political Commentary" presents works by seventy artists, including Nancy Spero, Hannah Wilke, David Hammons, and Gran Fury. Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Frank Lloyd Wright: Preserving an Architectural Heritage" is a show of more than seventy pieces of furniture, art-glass windows, lights, and other decorative objects spanning sixty years of the architect's career. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ Two site-specific installations, one by Sam Gilliam, the other by Robert Kushner. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Motifs and Meanings in Asian Art," a selection of sixty Korean, Chinese, and Japanese works from the Rockefeller collection. Through March 15. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—The six large paintings that are the centerpiece of Brice Marden's show of works inspired by the Tang-dynasty poet Cold Mountain are truly sophisticated: delicate yet grand in scale and unerringly structured by an almost impromptu line. The works on paper are, in contrast, awkward and pale, especially when compared with the Chinese calligraphy that they seem to mimic, halfheartedly. . . . ¶ For those unfamiliar with the Conceptual and graphic work of Lawrence Weiner, this exhibition, titled "Displacement," is a good primer. While the artist is known for creating exquisite artistic moments in the sparest situations, the current show is sort of the inverse. The wittiest piece, expressing a double-edged ambivalence, is on the Center's bathroom doors, which are labelled "Us" and "Them.". . . ¶ On the roof, Dan Graham has created a fine urban park with glass walls, a floor of spongy asphalt tiles, and a squat glass cylinder at its center. The park is elevated above the roof as if it were afloat, and it is very pleasant to spend time up there, especially in the nearby coffee bar/video lounge. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Fraunces Tavern Museum, 54 Pearl St.—"Come All You Gallant Heroes" chronicles—through objects and firsthand accounts—the lives of Continental Army and state-militia soldiers during the Revolutionary War. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 4.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Twenty-eight paintings and fourteen drawings by the French rococo artist Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743). Through Jan. 12. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"From Expressionism to Resistance, Art in Germany 1909-36." A very rich exhibition, from the collection of Marvin and Janet Fishman. The show does not center on the better-known masters of Die Brücke, although many of them are represented by a work or two. Instead of shopping for masterpieces, the Fishmans have taken a refreshingly scholarly approach and created a comprehensive historical view of German art in the years the works span. At nearly every turn there is a discovery to be made, even when the works themselves are not great. Ludwig Meidner's "Apocalyptic Landscape," while perhaps somewhat derivative stylistically, is an electrifying anthropomorphic modern townscape, in which every building, rock, and tree stump is in the process of eruption. In the center rests a blackened reclining figure, casting the painting as a contemporaneous inversion of Matisse's classical Fauvist landscape. Meidner's other works can be seen as precursors of contemporary German Expressionist works by Immendorf, and, to a lesser degree, of the hero paintings of Baselitz, not only in style but also in their agitated sense of disempowerment. But the Meidner section is just one of dozens of fascinating avenues this exhibition explores. Through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ "The Sigmund Freud Antiquities." Much has been made of the similarity between archeology and psychoanalysis, beginning with Freud himself, who avidly collected antiquities—some two thousand of them, from Egypt, Greece, Rome, and China. This show includes close to a hundred of them, most of which are small and many of which are of fine quality. Even the ordinary examples are full of modern meaning, such as a small steatite portrait of Amenophis I and his mother, Ahmose-Nofretiri, who, in the ultimate Oedipus complex, were buried together. The best part of the show is a series of black-and-white photographs—taken in 1938, by Edmund Engelman—of Freud's study and examining room shortly before he fled Vienna for London. They are ordinary pictures, but reveal just how Freud lived with his powerful assembly of statues: we find them jammed together in cases, perched atop various pieces of furniture, and lined up at the edge of his desk like an army of history's most exalted foot soldiers. Through Feb. 18. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3.)

Ronald Bladen

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Hallowed Haunts," a show of seventy-three drawings and watercolors by Charles Addams (1912-88), most of which first appeared in the pages of this magazine. Through March 8. . . . ¶ An exhibition of paintings, drawings, manuscripts, and published works by Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), the founder of the National Academy. Through March 12. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Imagining the New World," a shipload of paintings, drawings, maps, astrolabes, and other Columbian iconography drawn from museums and libraries in Italy, France, and Germany. Through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ "While They Fought: The Homefront in New York City" includes many posters, photographs (one shows Kate Smith surrounded by sailors), and artifacts from the Second World War. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—A large selection of manuscripts, letters, photographs, and other objects that shed light on the life of Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950). Through Feb. 29. (Berg Collection.). . . ¶ Merlin, Mordred, Gawain, and Galahad leap off the pages and prints of "King Arthur: Looking at the Legend." Through Feb. 22. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—Thirty paintings and sculptures by this year's artists-in-residence: Ada Pilar Cruz, Leonardo Drew, and Eve Sandler. Through March 1. . . . ¶ "Africa and the Diaspora" has nearly a hundred works from the museum's collection, dating from the fifth century to the present. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Philip Taaffe—Mostly large, abstract paintings that are sumptuously ornamental while being both technically and intellectually rigorous. Though they register effortlessly upon the mind and the eye, they are in fact as complex as the ancient Byzantine-Levantine cultures that have provided the artist with many of his motifs. Taaffe's colors, opulent and sometimes weathered yet without the facile decorator's touch of so much recent antiquing in art, may make you yearn for travel and adventure, poetry and pleasure. Through Jan. 11. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Short List—Glenn Goldberg, Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Jan. 30); **Gaston Lachaise,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St (open Mondays, through Feb. 22).

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Lothar Baumgarten—This German artist took the train across America and has created "Carbon," an extraordinary book of photographs of and from the trains, set off by simple yet highly sophisticated design elements. The result is an intelligent and modestly moving experience which conjures the history of the settlement of the United States in epic fashion. The several dozen matter-of-fact photographs in this exhibition—depicting such details of the artist's journey as an early industrial bridge, grazing cows, factories, and a weed-filled edge of tract—create a humbling unfolding of time warps, decay, and stillness. But the artist's true magic is in the book itself. One of the many copies on view is opened to a page of lists of dozens of trains which in poetic brutality conjure the destruction and profiteering which made possible the American concept of space and freedom. Cascading rows of such names as Cheyenne Mail, Sunset Ltd., Humming Bird, and Empire Corridor vividly create in silvery green type a sense of the violence and glory of the settlement of America. Through Jan. 18. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Short List—William Beckman, Stiebel, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **Ronald Bladen,** Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (starts Jan. 8); **Giorgio Cavallon,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **Ana Mendieta,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **Bill Traylor,** Ross, 50 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **Joyce Treiman,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 25).

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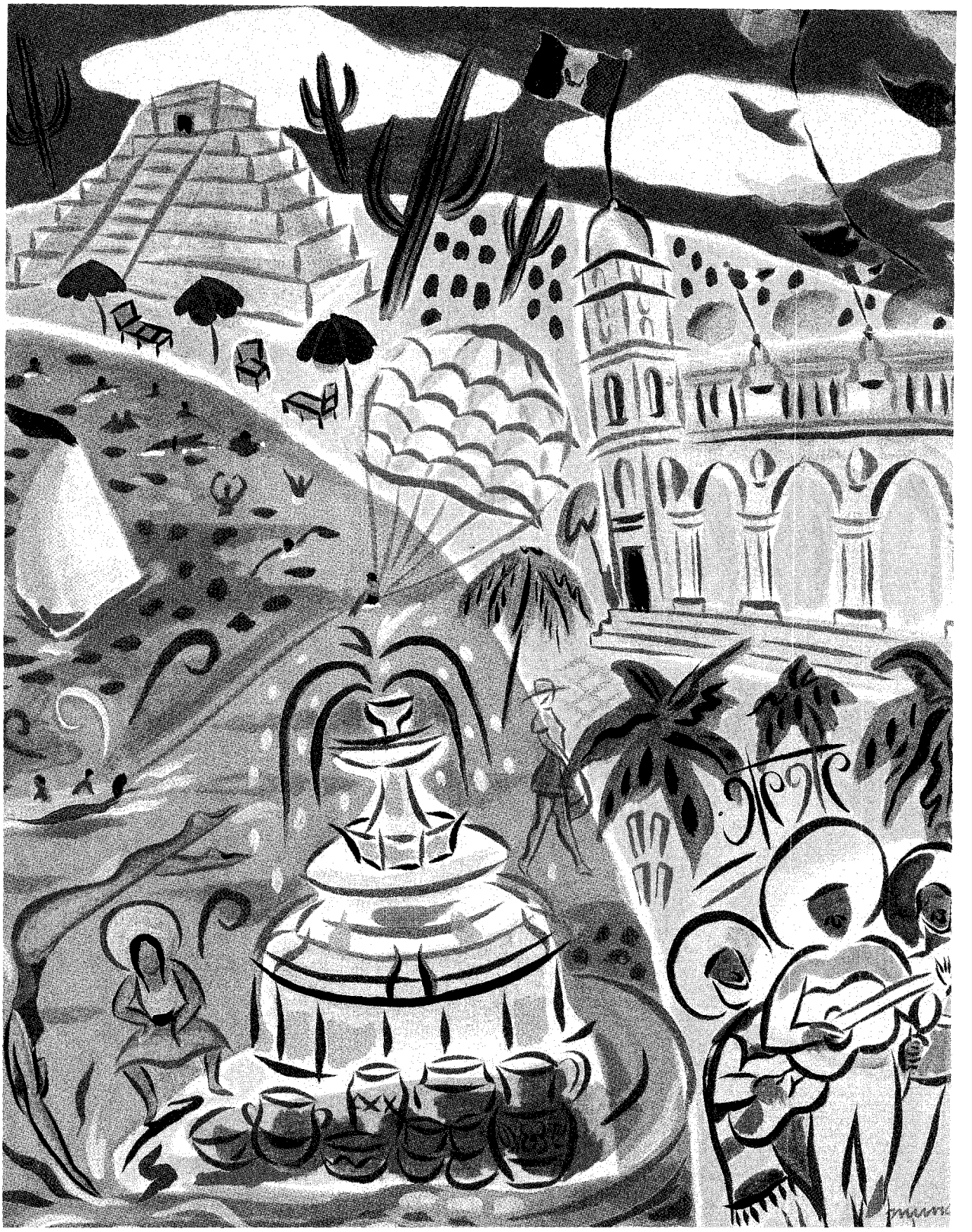

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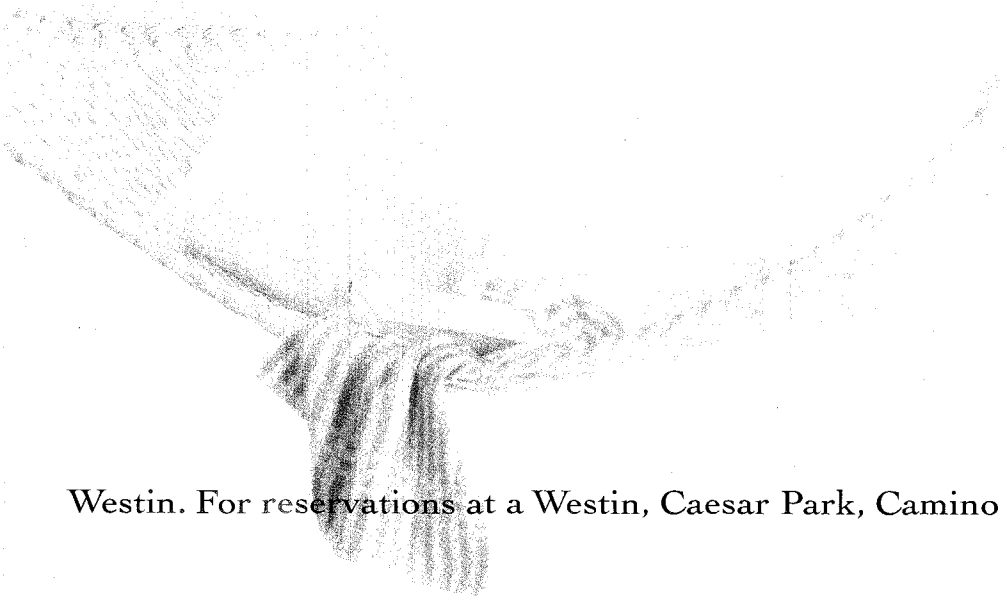

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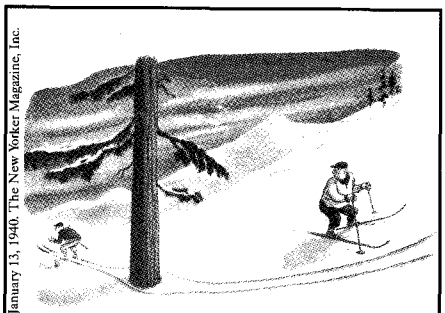

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GALLERIES—SoHo

Milton Avery—Not many of the works in this show of watercolors, all from the fifties, are gems, but it is still a fascinating exhibition, one that brings out an otherwise obscure, Kleelike side of the artist. Through Jan. 11. (Snyder, 588 Broadway. . . . ¶ Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St., has a complementary show of oil paintings and works on paper. Through Feb. 1.)

Luis F. Benedit—Benedit approaches his examination of gaucho machismo and of man's control of nature with a strong sense of ritual. The show centers on a group of objects used in the management of livestock—sheep shears, castration scissors—presented shiny-new in custom-fitted cases. Sometimes Benedit's sensibility borders on the surreal, as in a case filled with a dozen wooden eggs. It is a pleasant enough display. Part of "Art of the Americas: The Argentine Project." Through Jan. 11. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Lauren Ewing—This very interesting installation artist in object-maker's clothing presents a rumination on the marketplace that could be a critique of the critiques of an artist like Jeff Koons. The focus of the show is three block-front secretaries, all with identical dimensions; two are unpainted, as if they were from a starter-apartment-furniture store, and the third is covered in glitter like that on Dorothy's ruby slippers. The works were inspired by the spectacular sale at Christie's, several years ago, of a Nicholas Brown block-front secretary for $12,100,000, and are a deliberate indictment of commodity culture: megaphones are attached to the backs of the unpainted desks, while a leather body harness, suggesting enslavement to riches, is to be found behind the ruby-red one. Through Jan. 8. (Brown, 23 Watts St.)

Norberto Gómez—In an evident critique of colonialism, the artist has made a number of striking sculptures that look like a cross between church ornaments and gruesome weapons of torture. Part of "Art of the Americas: The Argentine Project." Through Jan. 25. (Fawbush, 76 Grand St.)

Víctor Grippo—The artist tries to domesticate nature with a number of sculptures in which he has wired potatoes and displayed their electrical charge through a voltmeter. They follow in a grand tradition of potato art that includes Beuys and Polke. One of the more haunting works is hard-boiled egg painted black. Part of "Art of the Americas: The Argentine Project." Through Jan 25. (Fawbush Projects, 74 Grand St.)

Imi Knoebel—Thick monochrome paintings on wood whose surfaces have been scratched, gouged, and buzz-sawed to gloriously violent, symphonic excess. They are titled "Schlachtbilder" ("Battle Paintings") but these brownish-black works might also symbolize the artist as a child, both creative and destructive, playing with mud. Also on view are two chipper and very beautiful paintings called "Portraits." Through Jan. 11. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Peter Schmersal—Fine painter's paintings, done in a fractured style with a medium-width brush. Schmersal's rocky coasts recall Monet's, while his arrangements of dead fish bring Hartley to mind. Through Jan. 18. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

Theodoros Stamos—This show includes work from the art-historically crucial years 1947 to 1963. Although Stamos was a member of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists, these works seem more appropriate to some second-rate member of the second generation. "The Divide #2," a dark, landscapish painting of 1958, is the strongest work, with a lyrical form and turbulent color. In general, the works bring to mind Gottlieb's firespots, Styll's intense streaks of color, Baziotes' image sense, and Rothko's teetering on the abyss, but their touch is perhaps closest to the lyricism of Milton Avery—good, but not good enough. Through Jan. 18. (Meisel, 141 Prince St. . . . ¶ A complementary show is at ACA, 41 E. 57th St., through Jan. 18.)

Short List—**Gregory Amenoff**, Munroe, 130 Prince St. (through Feb. 1); **Chuck Connelly**, Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway (through Jan. 25); **Leon Golub**, Baer, 476 Broome St. (through Feb. 8); **Sol LeWitt** and **John Murphy**, Weber, 142 Greene St. (through Jan. 25); **Pruitt-Early**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Jan. 29).

ALTERED STATES

Did you know that for his role in "The Phantom of the Opera" Lon Chaney hooked a wire through his nostrils and attached it to his forehead to give his nose that upturned, distorted look? (His nose was never the same again.) Or that for his role in "The Godfather" Marlon Brando wore a modified retainer, called a "dental plumper," on his bottom teeth to give him that famous jowly jaw? These are just some of the juicy tidbits to be gleaned from "Changing Faces," a new exhibition at the American Museum of the Moving Image, in Astoria, Queens. The show, which chronicles the history of makeup in film, consists largely of photographs of glamourpusses, but the real attraction is the stuff: Anjelica Huston's Morticia Addams wig, Liz Taylor's Cleopatra wigs, and, what's especially appetizing, the plastic tubing that makeup people filled with pea soup and plastered to the cheeks of Linda Blair's double in order to create the vomiting sequence in "The Exorcist."

Best of all, perhaps, are a few short letters which Orson Welles wrote to his personal makeup artist, Maurice Seiderman. It is said that Seiderman always kept a mold of Welles' nose close by him in case the actor's makeup needed impromptu adjustments. (The nose molds themselves are also on display at the museum.) "Dearest Maury," says one letter, "I'll need a nose—the enclosed sketches indicate the general idea. . . . Love, Orson." Another reads, "Dearest Maurie, As you know a great many noses—packages of noses—were sent to Rome (not Paris) which I didn't need." And a telegram: "LAST YEAR YOU SHOWED ME A SMALL GOODLOOKING STRAIGHT NOSE THIS IS WHAT I NEED FOR ZANUCK PICTURE STARTING TWO WEEKS STOP SO FAR ONLY TWO JEWISH NOSES HAVE ARRIVED LOVE ORSON"

OTHER GALLERIES

"Halston: Absolute Modernism"—The very name—which he sold to a conglomerate and was subsequently unable to use commercially—conjures images of disco excess. Yet his fashions were more consistently pure and unadorned than anyone else's. Using luxurious fabrics, and, until the Japanese designers came along, the most stripped-down of palettes, Halston was the model minimalist. In the exhibition's starkly spotlighted main hall, three wide strips of carpet have been pulled up and the resulting glue-marked industrial-chic runways have been populated with dozens of mannequins, wearing virtually every kind of Halston clothing. It's an oddly egalitarian Halston heaven. Through Jan. 11. (Fashion Institute of Technology, Shirley Goodman Resource Center, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Short List—**Dennis Oppenheim**, P.S. 1, 46-01 21st St., Long Island City (opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays; through Feb. 9); **Arthur Rackham**, Butler Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. (open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 4:45; through Feb. 19).

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PHOTOGRAPHY

A TRIPLE show at the new quarters of the Lowinsky gallery (575 Broadway; through January 18) is a chance to see just how broad the subject of photography can be. In one room you'll find a group of camera-lucida drawings by Sir John Herschel, the scientist and photographer whose being evokes such a powerful aura in a portrait by Julia Margaret Cameron.

Then there's a room with ten albumen prints from 1860 by Louis De Clercq. These architectural photographs, taken in Spain, are exquisite. They're the artist's last pictures; after making them, De Clercq apparently gave up photography as a hobby. (He is yet another fascinating figure from the early days of the medium—one who briefly but brilliantly used photography to explore the world, in ways that have been thoroughly and eloquently described by Eugenia Parry Janis in her essay for "Louis De Clercq," published in 1989 by Editions Cantz.) The photographs of his on view here were purposely chosen to reveal De Clercq's appreciation of Moorish arches as spaces and structures whose meaning goes beyond their physical, architectural expression—and that the pictures do.

The third exhibition is of photographs taken by Sally Larsen; her work, done in 1990, in Tokyo, looks as different from De Clercq's as one could imagine. But her pictures of a cabaret late at night echo his works: they are keyholes through which we are intimately introduced to very particular worlds.

EVELYN HOFER—Uniformly stolid black-and-white portraits, titled "The People of Soglio," which were taken in a Swiss village in the area where Hofer grew up and later spent her summers. Also on view are color photographs of rooms in the Villa Medici, in Rome; rooms in the Maison de Verre, in Paris; and the glamorous ladies' room at Radio City Music Hall. Through Jan. 18. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

"O, WRITE MY NAME (AMERICAN PORTRAITS, HARLEM HEROES)"—A show of hand gravures, by Richard Benson, of photographs taken by Carl Van Vechten between 1930 and 1960. Altogether there are fifty individuals portrayed here (half of them women, half men), and not one of them comes off as empty. Particularly touching is a portrait of Althea Gibson, the tennis player, who, as the caption explains, "broke the color bar at England's Wimbledon tournament, winning that singles title and the Wimbledon doubles championship." Gibson is not in a tennis outfit, the way a similar athlete might be pictured today. She's wearing a very nice dress and has white gloves on. Through Jan. 11. (Manhattan East Gallery of Fine Arts, 202 E. 76th St.)

"THE LEGACY OF W. EUGENE SMITH"—Sixty vintage prints by Smith and fifteen works each by past recipients of the W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography. Through Feb. 16. (International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

SHORT LIST—**ZEKE BERMAN**, Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. (through Jan. 11); **HARRY CALLAHAN** and **DOUG AND MIKE STARN**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 11); **HORST**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through Jan. 25); **SHEILA METZNER** and **BRADFORD WASHBURN**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through Feb. 2); **YASUZO NOJIMA**, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 33 Washington Pl. (through Jan. 11); **GEORGE WOODMAN**, Toll, 146 Greene St. (through Jan. 11).

MUSIC

THERE is a feeling in some circles—and we confess to having shared it at times—that musicians who claim to prefer their new music "conservative" or "eclectic" or "Neo-Romantic" or "accessible" are really saying that they'd be happier with old music exclusively, and welcome new music only insofar as it implicitly affirms that sentiment. This is not entirely a caricature: Jascha Silberstein, the co-principal cellist of the Metropolitan Opera, last year told *Opera News* that, as far as he was concerned, there was no need for new music and that Richard Strauss's "Four Last Songs" really were the last. And a year earlier Giuseppe Sinopoli, a conductor who has composed a good deal himself, told the *Times* that the Western compositional tradition just might be winding down, and that he found he'd rather conduct the music that, as a composer, he would just be paraphrasing anyway.

But that isn't the whole picture; there are others on the scene whose appetite for and labor on behalf of new music have outlasted what mere trendiness or an effort to keep up appearances could sustain. One of these is the conductor Leonard Slatkin, who has for years made new music a regular part of his St. Louis Symphony seasons, so that there is no pressure on any given piece to be a masterwork, or to dominate the program, or to prove all on its own that there is a worthwhile living musical tradition. What's more, Mr. Slatkin is willing to let new music provide some of the menu's creamy dishes and desserts, and there is something to be said for this as well. If living composers are expected to provide only the bitters, while all the sweets and savories come from the past—and over the past four decades too many concert programs with token contemporary works could be described that way—then it is small wonder if the composers themselves begin to incline exaggeratedly toward the bitter. We know very well that eclecticism and accessibility can be the pretexts for ephemeral, low-aiming music, but so they could all through music's history. Maybe it's best not to be too severe. Maybe.

Mr. Slatkin is in town for three subscription weeks at the Philharmonic. Typically, he has a New York première on each program. One performance remains of the Bolcom Clarinet Concerto (January 7); next comes John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 (beginning January 9); and, after that, Baker's "Shadows" (in next week's programs, beginning on the sixteenth).

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**LA TRAVIATA**, with Marilyn Mims, Jerry Hadley, and Paolo Gavanelli; conducted by John Fiore. (Jan. 6 and Jan. 11 at 8.). . . **THE GHOSTS OF VERSAILLES**, with music by John Corigliano and a libretto by William M. Hoffman. The large cast includes Teresa Stratas, Marilyn Horne, Graham Clark, Gino Quilico, Håkan Hagegård, Tracy Dahl, Renée Fleming, Neil Rosenshein, and Peter Kazaras; James Levine. (Jan. 7 and Jan. 10 at 8.). . . **LA BOHÈME**, with Veronica Villarroel, Priscilla Baskerville, Franco Farina, and Brian Schexnayder; Michelangelo Veltri. (Jan. 8 at 8 and Jan. 11 at 1:30.). . . With Mirella Freni, Barbara Daniels, Luciano Pavarotti, and Thomas Hampson; James Levine. (Jan. 12 at 7. A benefit performance.). . . With Veronica Villarroel, Elizabeth Holleque, Bruno Beccaria, and Brian Schexnayder; Michelangelo Veltri. (Jan. 13 at 8.). . . **DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER**, with Hildegard Behrens, Mignon Dunn, Gary Lakes, and James Morris; James Conlon. (Jan. 9 and Jan. 14 at 8.). . . **L'ELISIR D'AMORE**, with Maria Spacagna, Stanford Olsen, Mark Oswald, and Paul Plishka; Marcello Panni. (Jan. 15 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

"RADAMISTO"—Handel's opera seria, written in 1720, in a semi-staged production, conducted by Will Crutchfield. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Jan. 7 at 7:30: Mozart's Divertimento (K. 131), Vaughan Williams' Fourth Symphony and "Fantasia on 'Greensleeves,'" and William Bolcom's recently composed Clarinet Concerto, featuring Stanley Drucker. . . . ¶ Jan. 9, Jan. 11, and Jan. 14, all at 8, and Jan. 10 at 11 A.M.: A series of concerts dedicated by the orchestra to those who have died of AIDS, those who are living with AIDS, and those who support them. The concerts will include the New York première of Corigliano's Symphony No. 1, which was inspired by the AIDS crisis. Also on the program are Mozart's Symphony in F (K. 19a) and Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 (featuring Salvatore Accardo). . . . **NOTE:** Mr. Corigliano will discuss his symphony in a pre-concert lecture at Lincoln Center's Bruno Walter Auditorium, on Jan. 10 at 9:30 A.M. For information about lecture tickets, call 875-5656. . . . ¶ Pianist Gerald Robbins and members of the orchestra will perform Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet in a pre-concert recital, open to ticketholders, on Jan. 14 at 7.

QUINTET OF THE AMERICAS—Presenting premières of concertante works by William Thomas McKinley and Roberto Sierra, in which the chamber group is spotlighted against the orchestral background of the Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia (conducted by Glen Cortese, who also leads the orchestra in Villa-Lobos's "Bachiana Brasileira No. 9"). Rounding out the program is "The Soul," a wind quintet written in 1969 by Louis Ballard, who enjoys the highest profile among current Native American composers, sometimes under this name and sometimes as "Joe Miami," but generally not as "Hoganózhe," the Quapaw name he received when he was born, in 1931, in Miami, Oklahoma. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 9 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC—Lukas Foss, the orchestra's conductor laureate, leads a concert that spotlights his achievements in several musical disciplines: as composer of the "Clarinet Concerto (Tashi)," heard here in its New York première, featuring Richard Stoltzman (who will also be soloist in an arrangement of Mozart's Andante for Flute and Strings, K. 315); as arranger of orchestral music from Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" and Mozart's "Don Giovanni"; and as pianist in the final movement of Mozart's "Kegelstatt" Trio (K. 498). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Jan. 10-11 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 3.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY—Hans Vonk conducts Mozart's Overture to "The Impresario" and F-Major Piano Concerto, K. 459 (the latter featuring Jeffrey Siegel), and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 (with soprano Elizabeth Knighton Printy and bass-baritone Terry Cook). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 11 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 3.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA—Catherine Comet conducts Copland's "Appalachian Spring," Strauss's Oboe Concerto (featuring Richard Woodhams), and Fauré's Requiem (with soprano Beverly Hoch, baritone Kevin McMillan, and the San Antonio Symphony Mastersingers). (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 12 at 3.)

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MUSIC–Cont'd

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts D'Indy's "Chanson et Danse" (for winds) and Beethoven's "Prometheus" Overture and Piano Concerto No. 3 (featuring Israela Margalit, who also performs Grieg's Piano Sonata). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 13 at 8.)

New Jersey Symphony—The Absolut Vodka company underwrites annual concerts in which new American works commissioned by the company share the bill with speeches. This year, Hugh Wolff conducts the orchestra in Aaron Jay Kernis's Second Symphony, Joseph Turrin's Flute Concerto (featuring Carol Wincenc), and David Diamond's cantata "This Sacred Ground" (with the New York Choral Society and American Boychoir, in addition to the orchestra). Also on the program is John David Earnest's choral cycle "Sun Songs and Nocturnes," which will be performed by Chanticleer, a twelve-voice men's choir. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 15 at 7:30.)

New York Bach Ensemble—The vocalists sing Bach's motet "Singet dem Herrn"; the period-instrument players perform his Sixth "Brandenburg" Concerto; and all join for his Cantata No. 4, "Christ Lag in Todesbanden." Kent Tritle directs. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 439-8044. Jan. 15 at 8.)

RECITALS

Renée Jolles and Lev Natochenny—The violinist and the pianist perform sonatas by Schubert, Brahms, and Busoni. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 7 at 2 and Jan. 14 at 8.)

William Wolfram—While recognizing that music competitions can play an important role in making or breaking careers, music professionals have long viewed them as, at best, problematic. Thanks to the media blitz surrounding the 1989 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, in Fort Worth, the television-viewing public got a glimpse of the complexity of the system. A happy result was that many music lovers came to understand that in such competitions the winner is often the least objectionable musician, rather than the most stimulating one. This winter, the 92nd Street Y will present a series (called "Goldfingers") spotlighting two of the 1989 Van Cliburn Competition semifinalists (neither of them medal-winners), plus, in the opening concert, William Wolfram, a casualty of the Cliburn Competition of 1985. Mr. Wolfram has selected a program that ranges from rarely played works (an Allegro in B-Flat, K. 400, left uncompleted by Mozart in 1781) to concert standards (Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-Flat, Op. 61*), with stops along the way for Beethoven's early Bagatelles (Op. 33), a jazzy Arioso composed in 1989 by Edward Applebaum, virtuoso showpieces by Liszt and Scriabin (the latter's "Black Mass" Sonata), and miniatures by Mendelssohn, Ravel, and Debussy. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 7 at 8.)

Audubon String Quartet—Performing quartets by Haydn (in B-Flat, Op. 50) and Shostakovich (his First), and (with pianist Lev Natochenny) Brahms' Piano Quintet. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 7 at 8.)

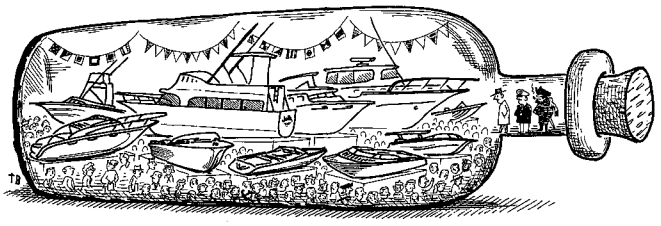
Neal Ramsay—Saxophonist, performing (among other works) Paul Creston's Sonata (Op. 19), Charles Koechlin's "Epitaphe de Jean Harlow" (assisted by flutist Jeanne Baxtresser), and the première of his own Sonata for Alto Saxophone; with pianist Ann Newton. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Jan. 8 at 8.)

New York Chamber Ensemble—Stephen Rogers Radcliffe directs the group in a brief benefit concert that spotlights Brahms' Serenade, Op. 11, in its original orchestration, for nine instruments. (National Society of Colonial Dames, 215 E. 71st St. Jan. 9 at 7. For information about tickets, call 870-2439.)

Bargemusic—Anne-Marie McDermott performs Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 6; violinist Ik-Hwan Bae and cellist Christopher Costanza join her for Schumann's "Four Fantasy Pieces" (Op. 88) and Mendelssohn's C-Minor Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 9 at 7:30 and Jan. 12 at 4.)

Andrew Bolotowsky and Gabriela Klassen—The flutist and the violinist offer a program that ranges from Mozart and Verdi to Gershwin and Fats Waller, with a stop along the way for a Passacaille by the French Baroque master Jacques-Martin Hotteterre ("Le Romain"), in which the musicians will be joined by masked dancers. (Anita Shapolsky gallery, 99 Spring St. Jan. 11 at *noon*. No tickets necessary.)

Masahito Tanaka and Yasuaki Itakura—The bassoonist and the clarinettist, assisted by pianist Karen Becker, play modern works by Japanese composers. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742. Jan. 11 at 5.)



The Boat Show

Scott Tennant and William Kanengiser—The guitarists, representing half of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, perform solos and duets, including a two-guitar arrangement of selections from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 11 at 8.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Performing chamber music by Saint-Saëns, Poulenc, Villa-Lobos, and Mendelssohn (his Octet). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 12 at 3.)

Chelsea Chamber Ensemble—Performing a Mozart violin sonata, trios by Poulenc (for oboe, bassoon, and piano) and Piston (for flute, clarinet, and bassoon), a movement from Berg's "Chamber Symphony," and the première of a wind quartet by David Sampson. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Jan. 12 at 4. Tickets at the door on the day of the concert.)

David Geringas—In his New York début recital, the Lithuanian cellist performs Bach's Suite No. 3 and (with pianist Tatjana Schatz) works by Brahms, Strauss, and Schnittke. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 12 at 5.)

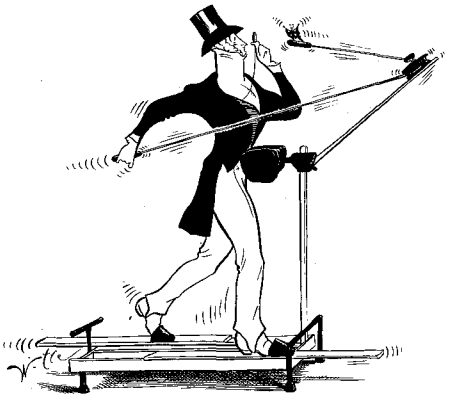
Sarah Rothenberg—Performing piano music from the Russian avant-garde as it was in the years surrounding the Revolution of 1917; including works by Arthur Lourié, Nikolai Roslavets, and Alexander Mosolov. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 12 at 8.)

Håkan Hagegård—The baritone performs songs by Schubert, Wolf, Mahler, Duparc, and Sibelius, as well as arias from "Tannhäuser," "Falstaff," and "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"; assisted by pianist Warren Jones. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 13 at 8.)

S.E.M. Ensemble—Presenting recent works by Elliott Sharp, Rhys Chatham, Ben Neill, and Petr Kotick. (Paula Cooper gallery, 155 Wooster St. Jan. 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 243-0964.)

Music Today—Christopher Kendall leads the ensemble in works by David Froom, Jon Deak, and George Crumb (his "Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death," featuring baritone William Sharp). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 15 at 8.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—Presenting music from the long career of Vittorio Rieti, ranging from his "Madrigale," written in 1927, to premières of three new works. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 15 at 8.)



JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

"Festival of Music for Electronically Interactive Instruments"—Jan. 8 at 8: David Wessel, George Lewis, Jin Hi Kim, and others. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: Nicolas Collins, Ben Neill, and Don Buchla. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719.)

Maureen McGovern—92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 8 at 8.

Ned's Atomic Dustbin—Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Jan. 10 at 8.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Rangers—Vs. the Winnipeg Jets, Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Jan. 8. . . . ¶ Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Jan. 14. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Hartford Whalers, Jan. 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Jan. 11. . . . ¶ Vs. the Detroit Red Wings, Jan. 14. (Game time, 7:35.)

Devils—Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Jan. 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Jan. 11. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Kings, Jan. 12. . . . ¶ Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Jan. 15. (Game time, 7:35.)

Knicks—Vs. the Atlanta Hawks, Jan. 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, Jan. 11. . . . ¶ Vs. the Portland Trail Blazers, Jan. 15. (Game time, 7:30.)

Nets—Vs. the Los Angeles Clippers, Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the Minnesota Timberwolves, Jan. 8. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Bucks, Jan. 10. . . . ¶ Vs. the Dallas Mavericks, Jan. 14. (Game time, 7:30.)

(*The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.*)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Boat Show—The eighty-second annual, featuring racers, cruisers, powerboats for waterskiers, sailboats, navigational equipment, and nautical fashions. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Jan. 10, from 10 to 6; Jan. 11, from 10 to 9; Jan. 12, from 11 to 7; and Jan. 13-15, from noon to 9. Tickets at the door on the days of the event. Through Jan. 19.)

"Bizarre Flea Market"—The people at La Mama Experimental Theatre have dug through their archives and storerooms and have come up with a bunch of oddities to sell: posters, costumes, photos, programs, props, and art works by performance artists. After the sale, La Mama regulars—Penny Arcade, John Kelly, Jeffrey Essmann, and Lypsinka among them—will perform into the night. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Jan. 11, from noon to 5.)

Talks—Jan. 9 at 6: Helen Hays, an ornithologist, gives a lecture called "Life with the Terns." (Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 W. 27th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 6:15: Michael Pollan talks about American gardens and lawns. (Horticultural Society of New York, 128 W. 58th St. For information about tickets, call 220-8747.). . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 5: David Roskies discusses the Yiddish film "The Dybbuk." (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9400.). . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 6:30: Alfonso Ortiz gives a talk called "Beyond Corn, Beans, and Squash." (New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St. 873-3400.)

Readings—Jan. 9 at 8: Harold Brodkey and Tobias Wolff read from their own prose. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8: Robertson Davies reads from his new book. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 7: Elizabeth Hardwick, Mark Rudman, and Dorian Ross read from their essays which were selected for "Best American Essays 1991." (Brentano's, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 7:30: Richard Bausch reads from his new book, "Violence." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Black Robe" (†).
Theatre 2: "Prospero's Books" (directed by Peter Greenaway), with John Gielgud.
Theatre 3: The National Film Board of Canada's Animation Festival.
Theatre 4: "My Own Private Idaho" (Gus Van Sant), with River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, James Russo, and William Richert.
Theatre 5: "Until the End of the World" (Wim Wenders), with William Hurt.
Theatre 6: "Madame Bovary" (Claude Chabrol; in French), with Isabelle Huppert.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Jan. 6: Theatre closed.
Jan. 7: "Diary for My Loves" (1988, Marta Meszaros; in Hungarian); and "Never, Nowhere, To No-One" (1989, Ferenc Teglasy; in Hungarian).
Jan. 8-9: "Diary for My Loves"; and "The Philadelphia Attraction" (1985, Peter Gardos; in Hungarian).
From Jan. 10: "Life on a String" (Chen Kaige; in Chinese).

Newman Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Jan. 9: "Gone with the Wind" (1939, Victor Fleming), with Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable.
From Jan. 10: "The Golden Coach" (†).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans. From Jan. 10: "Grand Canyon" (Lawrence Kasdan), with Kevin Kline.
Theatre 2: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 3: "Naked Lunch" (David Cronenberg), with Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, and Julian Sands.

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand, Nick Nolte, and Blythe Danner.
Theatre 3: "High Heels" (Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish).
Theatre 4: "The Prince of Tides."
Theatre 5: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 6: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 7: "JFK" (†).

Cinema Village 12th Street, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Jan. 9: "Born to Ski" (Warren Miller).
From Jan. 10: "Strangers in Good Company" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "Antonia and Jane" (Beeban Kidron), with Imelda Staunton and Saskia Reeves. From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 2: "Rush" (Lili Fini Zanuck), with Jason Patric and Jennifer Jason Leigh.
Theatre 3: "Young Soul Rebels" (Isaac Julien).
Theatre 4: "Rush."
Theatre 5: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Martin Short.
Theatre 6: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 7: "Paris Is Burning" (Jennie Livingston), a documentary.

Cinema Village 3rd Avenue, between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
Through Jan. 9: "Wings of Desire" (1988, Wim Wenders; in German, French, and English), with Bruno Ganz, Solveig Dommartin, and Otto Sander.
From Jan. 10: "The End of Old Times" (Jiri Menzel; in Czech).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 2: "Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.
Theatre 3: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky.
Theatre 4: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.
Theatre 5: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Addams Family" (†).

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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12	13	14	15			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 17.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin and Diane Keaton.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Cape Fear" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 9: "Bugsy" (†). From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 3: "Black Robe" (†).
Theatre 4: "Bugsy" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "The Addams Family" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.
Theatre 3: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand, Nick Nolte, and Blythe Danner.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"The Fisher King" (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin and Diane Keaton.
Theatre 2: "Father of the Bride."

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Grand Canyon" (Lawrence Kasdan), with Kevin Kline.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Let Him Have It" (Peter Medak).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Cape Fear" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 9: "Cape Fear" (†). From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater, Tony Goldwyn, and Milla Jovovich.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (Jon Avnet), with Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, Mary-Louise Parker, and Mary Stuart Masterson.
Theatre 2: "Hook" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "Rush" (Lili Fini Zanuck), with Jason Patric, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and Sam Elliott. From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 2: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 3: "Prospero's Books" (Peter Greenaway), with John Gielgud.

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky.
Theatre 2: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 3: "For the Boys" (†).
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "An American Tail: Fievel Goes West" (Phil Nibbelink and Simon Wells), an animated film; and (evenings only) "For the Boys"(†).
Theatre 5: "Naked Lunch" (David Cronenberg), with Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, and Julian Sands.
Theatre 6: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"At Play in the Fields of the Lord" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Addams Family" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand and Nick Nolte.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"The Station" (Sergio Rubini; in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"JFK" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Cape Fear" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 9: "An American Tail: Fievel Goes West" (Phil Nibbelink and Simon Wells), an animated film. From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater.

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky.
Theatre 2: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.
Theatre 3: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 4: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand and Nick Nolte.
Theatre 6: "The Addams Family" (†).
Theatre 7: "The Prince of Tides."

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 9: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Martin Short. From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 14: "Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America" (directed by Craig Baldwin). From Jan. 15: "Daughters of the Dust" (Julie Dash).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 14: "Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse" (Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper), a documentary. From Jan. 15: "35 Up" (Michael Apted), a documentary.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky. From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater.
Theatre 2: "The Addams Family" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Cape Fear" (†).
Theatre 2: "For the Boys" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "My Father Is Coming" (Monika Treut; in English and German).
Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (Agnieszka Holland, in German and Russian).
Theatre 3: "Life Is Sweet" (Mike Leigh).
Theatre 4: Through Jan. 9: (Separate admissions) "Overseas" (Brigitte Roüan; in French); and "City of Hope" (John Sayles). From Jan. 10: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (1988, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Carmen Maura, Fernando Guillén, Julieta Serrano, and Kiti Manver.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "At Play in the Fields of the Lord" (†).
Theatre 2: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 9: "Cape Fear" (†). From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater, Tony Goldwyn, and Milla Jovovich.
Theatre 4: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 5: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 6: "Rush" (Lili Fini Zanuck), with Jason Patric and Jennifer Jason Leigh.
Theatre 7: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 8: "The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand and Nick Nolte.
Theatre 9: Through Jan. 9: "The Prince of Tides." From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.

23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "The Fisher King" (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.
Theatre 2: "An American Tail: Fievel Goes West" (Phil Nibbelink and Simon Wells), an animated film.
Theatre 3: "For the Boys" (†).

GUILD, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Beauty and the Beast" (†).

WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "An American Tail: Fievel Goes West" (Phil Nibbelink and Simon Wells), an animated film. From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater, Tony Goldwyn, and Milla Jovovich.
Theatre 2: "My Own Private Idaho" (Gus Van Sant), with River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, James Russo, and William Richert.
Theatre 3: "The Fisher King" (Terry Gilliam), with Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges.
Theatre 4: "Frankie & Johnny" (Garry Marshall), with Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer.
Theatre 5: "The Black Robe" (†).
Theatre 6: "Homicide" (David Mamet), with Joe Mantegna.

ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand and Nick Nolte.

LOEWS FESTIVAL, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Until the End of the World" (Wim Wenders), with William Hurt.

57TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Naked Lunch" (David Cronenberg), with Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, and Julian Sands.

CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Madame Bovary" (Claude Chabrol; in French), with Isabelle Huppert.
Theatre 2: "Madame Bovary."

LOEWS FINE ARTS, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Inner Circle" (Andrei Konchalovsky), with Tom Hulce, Lolita Davidovich, and Bob Hoskins.

CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.

LOEWS COLUMBUS CIRCLE, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"JFK" (†).

62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Cape Fear" (†).

LINCOLN PLAZA 1, 2, AND 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Rhapsody in August" (†).
Theatre 2: "High Heels" (Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish).
Theatre 3: "The Double Life of Véronique" (Krzysztof Kieslowski, in French and Polish), with Irène Jacob and Philippe Volter.

BEACON, B'way at 74th. (496-7070)
"At the Max" (Julien Temple), a concert film of the Rolling Stones.

REGENCY, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"The Prince of Tides" (Barbra Streisand), with Streisand and Nick Nolte.

LOEWS 84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 9: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky. From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.
Theatre 4: "The Addams Family" (†).
Theatre 5: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 6: "Bugsy" (†).

METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 9: "Beauty and the Beast" (†). From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater, Tony Goldwyn, and Milla Jovovich.

OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Martin Short.
Theatre 2: "Father of the Bride."

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 2: "Hook" (†).
Theatre 3: "Bugsy" (†).
Theatre 4: "Rush" (directed by Lili Fini Zanuck), with Jason Patric, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and Sam Elliott.

George Stevens, Jr., once chalked up George Stevens, Sr.,'s artistry to experience. In work: "God knows how many episodes he shot of 'Rex the Wonder Horse,' how many Laurel and Hardys." And in life: "Growing up in San Francisco, a son of actors, hearing Shakespeare's and Dickens' work on the stage of the old Liberty Theatre, hearing the audience respond, or not respond." Starting as a cameraman in silent films roused the elder Stevens' instinct for eloquent physical details. He had a knack for shifting tempo from scene to scene, building and counterpointing comedy with an unruffled manner. He used his gliding camera to thread the most languid sequences with an artery of sympathy. His humane craftsmanship won him unexpected devotees, including Warren Beatty, who credits Stevens' "Shane" as the inspiration for the sounds of the gunshots in "Bonnie and Clyde."

*Stevens' versatility must have come partly from his acting blood. His gift for sharpening proven stars is showcased in the sublime social comedy "Alice Adams" (1935, playing January 11, at the Museum of Modern Art), with Katharine Hepburn and Fred MacMurray; the brittle but good-natured legal satire "Talk of the Town" (1942, playing January 10 and 12, at the Museum of Modern Art), with Cary Grant, Ronald Colman, and Jean Arthur; and the relentless weeper "Penny Serenade" (1941, playing January 9, at Theatre 80 St. Marks), with Grant and Irene Dunne. Grant said he found Stevens to be "*stim*-ulating," and the evidence is onscreen. In the upbeat "Talk" and the lugubrious "Serenade," Grant has a gravity that heightens the romantic and farcical moments. The shared enjoyment of Grant, Arthur, and Colman in "Talk" makes palatable its dialectic of legal theory versus practice. In the midst of all the tearjerking in "Serenade," Grant and Dunne touch comic paradise when they tote home a five-week-old adopted daughter in the dead of night and try not to awaken her while fumbling with baby things. Stevens is at his best in "Alice Adams"—and so is Hepburn. Based on Booth Tarkington's novel, the movie is a graceful yet painfully sardonic look at Midwestern shabby gentility. As the upwardly hopeful daughter of a unhealthy, unlucky clerk, Hepburn is both arch and lyrical. With Stevens conducting, she hits previously unheard notes of poetic defensiveness and desperate gaiety.*

Theatre 5: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.
Theatre 6: "Rush."
Theatre 7: "The Last Boy Scout."

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Jan. 9: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Martin Short.
From Jan. 10: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy.

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 2: "Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 9: "My Girl" (Howard Zieff), with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Macaulay Culkin, and Anna Chlumsky. From Jan. 10: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Martin Short.

LOEWS ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"The Addams Family" (†).

NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 9: "Cape Fear" (†). From Jan. 10: "Kuffs" (Bruce A. Evans), with Christian Slater, Tony Goldwyn, and Milla Jovovich.
Theatre 2: "For the Boys" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

8TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
Through Jan. 7: "Inspecteur Lavardin" (1986, directed by Claude Chabrol; in French), with Jean Poiret.
Jan. 8-9: "Who's That Knocking at My Door?" (1969, Martin Scorsese), with Zina Bethune, Harvey Keitel, and Lennard Kuras; and "Boxcar Bertha" (1972, Scorsese), with Barbara Hershey and David Carradine.
Jan. 10-11: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel; and "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" (1975, Scorsese), with Ellen Burstyn and Kris Kristofferson.
Jan. 12-13: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Cybill Shepherd, and Jodie Foster; and "Italianamerican" (1974, Scorsese), a documentary.
Jan. 14: "New York, New York" (1977, Martin Scorsese), with Liza Minnelli and Robert De Niro; and "American Boy: A Profile of Steven Prince" (1978, Scorsese), a documentary.
From Jan. 15: "The Last Waltz" (†); and "Raging Bull" (1980, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Cathy Moriarty, and Joe Pesci.

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Jan. 6: "Steamboat Bill, Jr." (1927, Charles Riesner; silent), with Buster Keaton; and three Buster Keaton short films.
Jan. 7: "Free and Easy" (1930, Edward Sedgwick), with Buster Keaton, Anita Page, and Robert Montgomery; and "The Hollywood Revue" (1929, Charles Riesner).
Jan. 8-9: "Parlor, Bedroom and Bath" (1931, Edward Sedgwick), with Buster Keaton; and three short films Keaton made for Poverty Row's Educational Pictures—"One Run Elmer" (1935), "Tars and Stripes" (1935), and "Grand Slam Opera" (1936).
Jan. 10-13: Seven Chances" (†); and four short silent films Buster Keaton made with Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle.
Jan. 13: (Evening only) "The King of the Champs Élysées" (1935, Max Nosseck), with Buster Keaton; and "The Invaders" (1936, Adrian Bunuel), with Keaton.
Jan. 14: "Doughboys" (1930, Edward Sedgwick), with Buster Keaton; and "What! No Beer?" (1933, Sedgwick), with Keaton and Jimmy Durante.
From Jan. 15: "Sidewalks of New York" (1931, Jules White and Zion Myers), with Buster Keaton and Anita Page; and three short films Keaton made at Columbia Studios.

THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Jan. 6: "This Strange Passion" ("El"; 1952, Luis Buñuel; a Mexican film, in Spanish); and "Nazarin" (1958, Buñuel; in Spanish), with Francisco Rabal.
Jan. 7: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971, Stanley Kubrick), with Malcolm McDowell, Patrick Magee, and Adrienne Corri; and "Brazil" (1985, Terry Gilliam), with Jonathan Pryce, Kim Greist, Robert De Niro, Katherine

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Helmond, Michael Palin, Ian Holm, Ian Richardson, and Kathryn Pogson.

Jan. 8: "Indiscretion of an American Wife" (1954, Vittorio De Sica), with Jennifer Jones, Montgomery Clift, Richard Beymer, and Gino Cervi; and "The Gold of Naples" (1957, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian), with Sophia Loren, De Sica, Silvana Magnano, and Totò.

Jan. 9: "Penny Serenade" (see blurb on page 16); and "No Sad Songs for Me" (1950, Rudolph Maté), with Margaret Sullavan and Wendell Corey.

Jan. 10-11: "Jules and Jim" (1962, François Truffaut; in French), with Jeanne Moreau, Oskar Werner, and Henri Serre; and "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud.

Jan. 12: "Macbeth" (1971, Roman Polanski), with Jon Finch; and "Othello" (1965, Stuart Burge), performed by Laurence Olivier and the National Theatre of Great Britain.

Jan. 13: "Kameradschaft" (†); and "Westfront 1918" (1930, G. W. Pabst; in German).

Jan. 14: "Victim" (1961, Basil Dearden), with Dirk Bogarde, Sylvia Syms, and Dennis Price; and "Peeping Tom" (1960, Michael Powell), with Karl Boehm and Moira Shearer.

Jan. 15: "The Rose Tattoo" (1955, Daniel Mann), with Anna Magnani and Burt Lancaster; and "The Fugitive Kind" (1960, Sidney Lumet), with Marlon Brando, Magnani, and Joanne Woodward.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Jan. 6 at 2:30: "The German Chainsaw Massacre" (1990, directed by Christoph Schlingensief), with Alfred Edel. . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 3 and Jan. 10 at 6: "Brussels Transit" (1980, Samy Szlingerbaum; in Yiddish and French). . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 6 and Jan. 7 at 2:30: "My Lovely Monster" (1990, Michel Bergmann), with Silvio Francesco, Nicole Fischer, and Sara Karloff. . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 6 and Jan. 11 at 2:30: "Urban Peasants" (1975, Ken Jacobs). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 3: "Everything's for You" (1989, Abraham Ravett; in English and Yiddish), an animated film. . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6: "Let It Be" (1989, Henryk M. Brode and Frans van der Meulen; in Yiddish). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6: "Bronstein"s Children" (1990, Jerzy Kawalerowicz), with Matthias Paul, Armin-Mueller Stahl, and Angela Winkler. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 2:30 and 6: "Six in Paris" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Rouch, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, and Jean Douchet; in French). . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 3 and 6: "Dying to Please: The Dolphin Dilemma" (1989, Julie Sperling and Douglas Freilich), a documentary. . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 2:30 and Jan. 12 at 5: "Easy Living" (1937, Mitchell Leisen), with Jean Arthur, Edward Arnold, and Ray Milland. . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 3: "Yiddish" (1991, Ronald Ribman; in English and Yiddish). . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 6 and Jan. 12 at 2: "Talk of the Town" (see blurb on page 16). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 2: "Alice Adams" (see blurb on page 16). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 5: "The Sleeping Car Murders" (1966, Costa-Gavras; in French), with Simone Signoret and Yves Montand. . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 5: "Hester Street" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 2:30: "Dirigible" (1931, Frank Capra), with Jack Holt, Ralph Graves, Fay Wray, Hobert Bosworth, Clarence Muse, and Roscoe Karns. . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 6 and Jan. 14 at 2:30: "American Madness" (1932, Frank Capra), with Walter Huston. . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 3 and 6: Two programs of sections from early Russian silent films. . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 6: "It Happened One Night" (1934, Frank Capra), with Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable, Walter Connolly, Roscoe Karns, and Alan Hale.

Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Jan. 6 at 2: "Take the Money and Run" (1969, Woody Allen), with Allen and Janet Margolin. . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 4:15, Jan. 8 at 9, and Jan. 9 at 4:15: "The Second Circle" (1990, Alexander Sokurov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 6:30 and Jan. 7 at 2: "The Householder" (1963, James Ivory), with Shashi Kapoor. Mr. Ivory will be present on Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 9: "Days of Eclipse" (1988, Sokurov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 4:15: "The Lonely Voice of Man" (1978, Sokurov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6:30 and Jan. 8 at 2: "Beauty and the Beast" (1946, Jean Cocteau; in French), with Jean Marais, Josette Day, Marcel André, and Michel Auclair. . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 9 and Jan. 8 at 4:15: "Mournful Indifference" (1983, Sokurov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 6:30 and Jan. 9 at 2: "The Golden Coach" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 6:15 and Jan. 10 at 4: "The Left Handed Gun" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8:30: "Save and Protect" (1989, Sokurov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 2 and Jan. 12 at 6: "American Madness" (1932, Frank Capra), with Walter Huston. . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 6 and 10 and Jan. 11 at 2: "Gold Diggers of 1933" (1933, Mervyn LeRoy), with Ruby Keeler, Ginger Rogers, and Dick Powell. . . . ¶ Jan. 10 at 8, Jan. 11 at 10, and Jan. 13 at 2: "Gabriel Over the White House" (1933, Gregory La Cava), with Walter Huston, Karen Morley, and Franchot Tone. . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 4 and Jan. 13 at 9: "Story of a Love Affair" (1950, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 6, Jan. 12 at 2, and Jan. 13 at 6:45: "Our Daily Bread" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 8:15 and Jan. 12 at 4:15: "Je Tu Il Elle" (1974, Chantal Akerman; in French). . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8:30, Jan. 13 at 4:15, and Jan. 14 at 8:30: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966, Mike Nichols), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, and Sandy Dennis. . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 2 and Jan. 15 at 6:30: "Wild Boys of the Road" (1933, William Wellman), with Frankie Darro and Rochelle Hudson. . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 4:15 and Jan. 15 at 8:30: "In Which We Serve" (1942, Noël Coward and David Lean), with Coward, Celia Johnson, John Mills, Kay Walsh, Michael Wilding, and Richard Attenborough. . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 6:45 and Jan. 15 at 2: "The Premature Burial" (1962, Roger Corman), with Ray Milland, Hazel Court, Heather Angel, and Alan Napier. . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 4:15: "Faithless" (1932, Harry Beaumont), with Tallulah Bankhead and Robert Montgomery.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Jan. 11 at 2: "Naked Lunch" (David Cronenberg), with Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, and Julian Sands. Mr. Cronenberg will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 2: "Burroughs" (1983, Howard Brookner), a documentary about William Burroughs, along with film appearances by Burroughs. . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 6: "Naked Making Lunch" (1992, Chris Rodley), a documentary on the making of the film "Naked Lunch."

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 8 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Cross My Heart" (1990, Jacques Fanstan; in French), with Sylvain Copans, Dominique Lavanant, and Jacques Bonnaffé. . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Fric-Frac" (1939, Maurice Lehmann and Claude Autant-Lara; in French), with Fernandel, Arletty, and Michel Simon.

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. (1-718 783-6501)—Jan. 11 at 2: "La Terra Trema" (1947, Luchino Visconti; in Sicilian dialect). . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 2: "Senso" (1955, Visconti), with Farley Granger and Alida Valli.

Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, 42nd St. at First Ave.—Jan. 10 at 6:30: "Mr. Thank You" (1936, Hiroshi Shimizu; in Japanese); and "Tales of Jiro" (1955, Shimizu; in Japanese). (For information about tickets, call 752-0824.)

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

The Addams Family—Misguided graveyard slapstick. One of the most pungent things about Charles Addams' cartoons is the up-front matter-of-factness of their macabre incongruities. The "everyday" contexts (kids playing, carollers carolling) and the devilish twists (a doll set on a guillotine, a cauldron aimed at the carollers) come at the reader all at once. Drawing on the mid-sixties ABC-TV show, which first named the characters who inhabit Addams' stately mansion, the director, Barry Sonnenfeld, and the screenwriters, Caroline Thompson, Larry Wilson, and the uncredited Paul Rudnick, re-create Addams' famous drolleries. But they never find their own equivalent to his suave, sneaky-gleeful subversiveness. Even lying flat on the page, Addams' cartoons have better timing. The moviemakers reintroduce Morticia (Anjelica Huston), Gomez (Raul Julia), and their children, Pugsley (Jimmy Workman) and Wednesday (Christina Ricci), then welcome back Uncle Fester (Christopher Lloyd) in the form of a character who may not be the real ghoul. It's sitcom stuff, catalyzed by routine types: Gomez's shyster lawyer (Dan Hedaya) and the lawyer's loan shark (Elizabeth Wilson). A couple of actors rise above the script. Ricci is uproarious as Wednesday. She has a supernal stillness, and everything she does is skewed; she gets her effects from some other world. Huston pulls off an ultra-refined yet lowdown delivery. Too bad her dialogue is so predictably mordant; by the end, the reverse clichés turn back into clichés. Co-starring the hand of Christopher Hart as Thing.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Loews Orpheum VII, Waverly, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

At Play in the Fields of the Lord—Hector Babenco's film, which is based on Peter Matthiessen's 1965 novel of the same name, feels lifeless right from the start, and it perks up only occasionally in the course of the three hours and ten minutes it takes to tell its story. The movie is set in the Amazon basin, and it's about the destruction of an Indian tribe by a combination of capitalist greed (in the form of the local authorities) and cultural insensitivity (in the form of Protestant missionaries from America). Matthiessen's epic may have held some surprises for its mid-sixties readers, but its ideas have since lost a lot of their power and all their freshness. The dramatic conflicts aren't very complex, and most of the characters are one-dimensional, instantly readable. Yet Babenco treats every scene as if it contained infinite riches: he draws out simple actions, reiterates obvious ideas, lingers on the faces of characters who have no more secrets to yield up. Among the actors—a high-powered group that includes John Lithgow, Tom Berenger, Kathy Bates, and Daryl Hannah—only Aidan Quinn, as a young missionary who learns to respect the Indians' culture, comes through at all. An air of fatigue and defeat pervades the picture. The effort that Babenco and his actors have put into dramatizing this material is heartbreakingly apparent, yet, no matter how hard they work, the scenes refuse to play, and the movie never manages to generate any real momentum. It's an honest, well-intentioned flop. Screenplay by Babenco and Jean-Claude Carrière.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/16/91.) (Beekman, and Chelsea Cinemas.)

Anna Magnani and Duncan Lamont in "The Golden Coach"

Beauty and the Beast—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a

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IN BRIEF–Cont'd

frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunkheaded village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman–Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantle clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Metro Cinema.)

Black Robe—An unusual and absorbing new film about North American Indians and a French Jesuit missionary in the early seventeenth century. It's a culture-clash drama in which the most important conflicts take place in the realm of the spirit. The main characters are an excruciatingly pious young priest called Father Laforgue (Lothaire Bluteau) and an Algonquian chief named Chomina (August Schellenberg). Their world views are so radically opposed that at times the two men seem unable to acknowledge each other as human. The screenwriter, Brian Moore, and the director, Bruce Beresford, show extraordinary respect for the stubborn, almost impenetrable otherness of their historical characters. The film is an adventure story in the truest sense: the filmmakers lead us into unknown territory, and keep pushing us farther and farther on, until, by the end, we find ourselves deep in the wilderness of the seventeenth-century consciousness. Bluteau's performance is enervated, but the script is superbly intelligent, the direction is confident, and Schellenberg's Chomina is magnificent. The picture moves on a steady, powerful flow of ideas and emotions, and it stirs in us a sense of discovery. Based on Moore's 1985 novel of the same name. Also with Aden Young, Sandrine Holt, and Tantoo Cardinal. Cinematography by Peter James.—T.R. (11/18/91) (Angelika Film Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Bugsy—This opulent period gangster movie, written by James Toback and directed by Barry Levinson, is largely a showcase for the old-fashioned star magnetism of Warren Beatty, who plays the legendary Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel. The screenplay portrays Bugsy as a charming, mercurial psychopath with a rather touching taste for glamour; it concentrates on the last few years of the hero's life, when he became a Hollywood celebrity and built the first hotel-casino in Las Vegas. He's a vivid, unpredictable, one-of-a-kind guy, and the filmmakers seem to realize that they can't take their eyes off him for a second. Siegel is a fascinating monster; we don't want to take our eyes off him, either. This is a rich role for Beatty, and he tears into it hungrily. It's the best kind of star performance: Beatty seem entirely himself, but in a new way. He's ferociously, mesmerizingly funny. Annette Bening plays Bugsy's lover, the tough, wily, independent-minded mob courtesan Virginia Hill, and she more than holds her own in her scenes with the star. And the movie is filled with pungent, memorable supporting performances. Ben Kingsley brings a surprisingly dry, elegant sense of comic timing to his portrait of sober Meyer Lansky (one of the hero's partners in the New York mob). Harvey Keitel, as Mickey Cohen, Bugsy's right-hand man in Los Angeles, spits out his profane lines as if they were live firecrackers. Elliott Gould plays the tiny role of Harry Greenberg, an aging, flabby mob schlemiel, and he's absolutely inspired; he plays this dazed character as a Willy Loman who has wandered too far from the old territory. Despite its lavish surface, this is essentially a movie of small, lovingly crafted pleasures. It's smart, swanky fun. Also with Bill Graham (as Lucky Luciano) and Joe Mantegna (as George Raft). Allen Daviau did the glamorous cinematography.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

At the Baronet, Mary-Louise Parker and Mary Stuart Masterson and Kathy Bates and Jessica Tandy in "Fried Green Tomatoes"

Cape Fear—Martin Scorsese's new film is a remake of a bluntly effective 1962 thriller about a middle-class family—husband, wife, teen-age daughter—who are terrorized by a devious, implacable psychopath. The original (which was based on a pulp novel by John D. MacDonald and directed by J. Lee Thompson) had the straight-ahead construction of a horror movie, and it never pretended that what it was doing was good for us. The remake muddies the waters with self-consciousness: Scorsese and the screenwriter, Wesley Strick, have loaded the movie with apparent moral ambiguities, facile ideas about guilt and redemption, and explicit attempts to portray the scuzzy villain as a mythic nemesis. This picture is much flashier and more assaultive than the original. But the Christian/mythological subtext that Scorsese dredges up and places in the foreground has the effect of increasing our emotional distance from the story. Besides, it isn't true subtext; it's stuff that has been imposed on, rather than discovered in, the material. This is still, at heart, a picture whose sole aim is to give its audience huge, bowel-loosening shocks; the veneer of moral seriousness and psychological complexity that Scorsese brings to the enterprise feels like an attempt to convince himself that he's not doing what he's doing. This is Scorsese's worst picture—an ugly, incoherent piece of work. With Robert De Niro (frenetic but thoroughly uninteresting as the villain), Nick Nolte, Jessica Lange, Juliette Lewis, and Illeana Douglas. Joe Don Baker, playing the small part of a private detective, gives the liveliest performance; he's so good that you wish he were playing De Niro's role. The stars of the 1962 version, Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck, make brief appearances, and the score is a reorchestration of Bernard Herrmann's original music.—T.R. (12/2/91) (Bay Cinema, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . ¶ Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin; through Jan. 9.)

For the Boys—Bette Midler plays Dixie Leonard, a singer-dancer-comedienne who becomes famous in the early days of the Second World War, when she teams up with an established star named Eddie Sparks (James Caan, who gives the movie's best performance). Framed by an award ceremony at which Dixie and Eddie are to be honored for their many years of entertaining troops on U.S.O. tours, the story is told in a series of flashbacks. Most of the big sequences take place in wartime: in London and North Africa during the Second World War; in Korea in the early fifties; in Vietnam in 1969. This structure allows Midler to perform musical numbers from different eras and to attempt the acting tour de force of playing a character at several distinct stages of life. She piles persona on top of persona on top of persona for two and a half hours in an effort to overwhelm us with the sheer force and infinite variety of herself: she is the world. The movie (which was produced by her own company) is meant to serve as the Portable Bette—a boxed set of Midler moments. In the Second World War sequences, the picture has a certain trashy charm, but the Korea and Vietnam scenes feature "realistic" combat footage and glib antiwar sentiments. The film itself has a kind of life-achievement-award feel to it: when it's over, the words "a great entertainer and a wonderful human being" seem to have acquired a new, unprecedentedly berserk meaning. Bette Midler begins as a red-hot mama and winds up as Mother Courage. And this vanity production is such an ordeal that it turns into a demonstration of a startling thesis: war is bad, but entertainment is hell. Also with George Segal, Christopher Rydell, and Arye Gross. Directed by Mark Rydell, from a screenplay by Marshall Brickman, Neal Jimenez, and Lindy Laub.—T.R. (12/16/91) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and National Twin.)

The Golden Coach (1953)—At his greatest, Jean Renoir expressed the beauty in our common humanity; that's what Anna Magnani at *her* greatest also expressed. This movie—his tribute to the commedia dell'arte—is also a tribute to her fabulous gifts, and she gives the film its gusto. We see her here not only as a sensual, earthy "woman of the people" but as an artist who exhausts her resources in creating the illusion of volcanic reality. Though Renoir has taken Prosper Mérimée's vehicle and shaped it for her, it will be forever debatable whether it contains her or she explodes it. But as this puzzle is parallel with the theme—a Pirandellian confusion of theatre and everyday life—it adds another layer to the ironic comedy. The film is set in a dusty frontier in Renaissance Peru: a band of Italian strolling players is attempting to bring art to South America. The movie has been compared to "Così Fan Tutte"—it is light and serious, cynical and beautiful, a blend of color, wit, and Vivaldi music. The film was made in English; though Magnani herself, in her first English-speaking role, is vocally magnificent, some of the other actors speak in dreary tones and some of the minor characters appear to be dubbed. Duncan Lamont, as the Spanish viceroy, and Riccardo Rioli, as the bullfighter, are just fine, but Paul Campbell, as the Castilian nobleman, is inept and his scenes go limp. This was Renoir's second color film (after "The River"), and his directorial rhythm seems to falter in his work in color, but in the glow and warmth of "The Golden Coach" this defect, like the others, is trifling. The cinematography is by Claude Renoir.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 8-9. . . . ¶ Newman Theatre; starting Jan. 10.)

Hester Street (1975)—A modest comedy about the assimilation process among a group of Russian-Jewish immigrants living on the Lower East Side in 1896. Independently made, this first feature by the writer-director Joan Micklin Silver begins lamely, but it wins one over. Carol Kane is lovely as the timid, pious, rejected wife of a sweatshop worker who has broken away from the Old World traditions that she represents. Mel Howard plays Bernstein, the scholarly boarder who loves her. The weaknesses are in the casting and the handling of the aggressive characters, and in the thin, audience-pleasing attitudes toward the Americanization process. With Steven Keats and Dorrie Kavanaugh; adapted from a story by Abraham Cohen.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 11.)

Hook—Steven Spielberg's film means to give a contemporary spin to J. M. Barrie's classic "Peter Pan." The movie is a failure in almost every way, but it's unmistakably of our

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time: its lack of conviction and its panicky eagerness to please are depressingly up-to-the-minute. The script, by Jim V. Hart and Malia Scotch Marmo, presents Peter Pan as a grown-up American family man named Peter Banning (Robin Williams). Banning, a yuppie corporate lawyer, has no idea that he was ever Peter Pan, and he's so wrapped up in making money that he neglects his wife and kids. The movie contrives to send him back to Neverland, where he rediscovers his former identity and does battle with his old nemesis, Captain Hook (Dustin Hoffman). The filmmakers seem unable (or unwilling) to keep their mind on the business of telling a rousing, fantastic adventure. They use up their energy and our patience in scattershot attempts to appeal to every conceivable audience. The whole sorry spectacle turns out to be a kind of self-help fairy tale, an illustrated lecture on finding the inner child. The picture is full of special-effects "magic," but the tricks feel strained; we're constantly aware of the anxiety and the backbreaking effort it's taking to produce them, and that's no kind of magic at all. Spielberg's inventiveness has a desperate quality here; the movie seems drenched in flop sweat. In this version of "Peter Pan," the imagination feels like a burden—a terrible, crushing obligation. Also with Maggie Smith, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Dante Basco, Caroline Goodall, Charlie Korsmo, and Amber Scott. The running time is two hours and fifteen minutes.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Movieland 8th St. Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Coronet, Loews Orpheum VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

JFK—With Kevin Costner, directed by Oliver Stone. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews Tower East, Chelsea Cinemas, and Loews Columbus Circle.)

Kameradschaft (1931)—Based on an actual incident in which German miners crossed the border to go to the assistance of French miners trapped by an explosion, G. W. Pabst's study of disaster and rescue is a powerful and imaginative re-creation of a high moment in human comradeship. The socialist-pacifist implications which Pabst sees in the episode had tremendous international impact in the days when people were more idealistic. In the early thirties it was still possible for large audiences to believe in the symbolic revolutionary meaning of smashing through artificial frontiers for the sake of natural brotherhood. This movie belongs to a genre that has disappeared. Technically a brilliant achievement, "Kameradschaft" is famous among film craftsmen for the experimental use of sound, and for magnificent creative editing. The subterranean scenes have a nightmarish authenticity. The cast of French and German players includes Alexander Granach and Elizabeth Wendt. In German.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Jan. 13.)

The Last Waltz (1978)—Arguably, the best of all rock-concert documentaries. Martin Scorsese's film of The Band's Thanksgiving, 1976, performance in San Francisco is even-tempered and intensely satisfying. Scorsese, who shot it while he was still working on "New York, New York," seems in complete control of his talent and of the material. Visually, it's dark-toned and rich and classically simple. The sound (if one has the good luck to catch it in a theatre equipped with a Dolby system) is so clear that the instruments have the distinctness that one hears on the most craftsmanlike recordings. And the casual interviews have a musical, rhythmic ease; Scorsese's conversations with the men give us a sense of the pressures that strain their feelings of community. With Band members—Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, and Rick Danko. Also with performers who represent the different styles of rock and the traditions that have fueled it—Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, Ronnie Hawkins, Dr. John, the Staples, Ringo Starr, Paul Butterfield, Emmylou Harris, Neil Diamond, and others. It's a relief to see a rock film without whizzing-around, catch-as-catch-can cinematography; Scorsese planned the camera cues like a general deploying his troops, and Michael Chapman, Vilmos Zsigmond, Laszlo Kovacs, David Myers, and several other cinematographers are responsible for the serene imagery and its inner excitement.—P.K. (8th St. Playhouse; starting Jan. 15.)

The Left Handed Gun (1958)—Arthur Penn's first film, adapted by Leslie Stevens from a television play by Gore Vidal, has some of the violent, legendary, nostalgic qualities of his later "Bonnie and Clyde." A young, great-looking Paul Newman plays Billy the Kid as an ignorant boy in the sex-starved Old West. There's a foreshadowing of the sensibility that shaped "Bonnie and Clyde" when Billy's shotgun blasts a man right out of one of his boots. The man falls in the street, but his boot remains upright; a little girl starts to

At MOMA, Jean Arthur and Edward Arnold in "Easy Living"

giggle at the boot and doesn't get very far—her mother slaps her, and that slap is the seal of the awareness of horror. It says that even children must learn that some things that look funny are not only funny. It says that only idiots would laugh at pain and death. The slap is itself funny, and yet we suck in our breath; we don't dare to laugh. With Hurd Hatfield, Lita Milan, John Dehner, Denver Pyle, Nester Paiva, John Dierkes, and James Congdon.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 9-10.)

Our Daily Bread (1934)—About how a young couple (Karen Morley and Tom Keene) make a go of life on a bankrupt farm by turning it into a co-op. King Vidor—restless, never satisfied by his commercial successes—borrowed up to his ears to make this movie, and it's innovatively well directed. He experiments with Russian ideas of montage, and manages to make a grand finale out of the co-operative farmers digging a ditch to irrigate a cornfield—cheating only a little by heightening the scene with an orchestral score. The rhythmic visual conceptions are beautifully realized, but the acting and writing are awful; sophisticated in film terms, it's a primitive picture in dramatic terms. The earnest title indicates where Vidor went wrong; the film suffers from awkwardly simple thinking and from the excessive virtue ascribed to the common-man characters. With John Qualen and Barbara Pepper. Written by Elizabeth Hill, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and Vidor; cinematography by Robert Planck.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 11-13.)

Rhapsody in August—These days, people are more interested in Kurosawa than he is in being Kurosawa. With this weak, tepid brew of message movie and family drama, the sensei moves further away than ever from his trademark imagistic energy toward the contemplative style of previous Japanese masters. (Even the title recalls Ozu.) In this tri-generational story, four children vacation with their grandmother (Sachiko Murase) in the country outside Nagasaki while their parents visit a granduncle and his half-American son (Richard Gere), in Hawaii. Kurosawa shows none of Ozu's ability to particularize and intensify domestic happiness and heartbreak. The few memorable shots come when the kids, weaned from television, see nature through the poetry of their grandmother's household lore. When they become obsessed with the Nagasaki A-bomb, which killed their grandfather, everything turns preachy and disingenuous. (Even American college T-shirts take on an editorial slant.) Gere plays a Yankee who speaks Japanese and empathizes with his Asian relatives. Kurosawa wants to transcend anti-Americanism; the grandmother says that War, not the Bomb, is the problem. But no one raises the question of why wars start. This movie's pacifism is a pacifier. Kurosawa wrote the script, from a novel by Kiyoko Murata; Takao Saito and Masaharu Ueda did the cinematography. In Japanese.—M.S. (Lincoln Plaza.)

Seven Chances (1925)—The plot gimmick—the hero must be married in a few hours in order to collect an inheritance—is an antique, and the play flopped on Broadway, but what Buster Keaton and his gag writers managed to do with the material will be everlastingly fresh. When the news of the shy hero's need to wed is published in the papers, prospective brides arrive, singly at first and then in droves, and the distraught man, fleeing them, dislodges a boulder, which dislodges others, and soon he is pursued by hundreds of huge boulders. It's a lovely comedy, imaginatively—possibly faultlessly—directed by Keaton. With Snitz Edwards and Ruth Dwyer. Silent.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Jan. 10-13.)

Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country—A better subtitle might be "The Lost Opportunity." Directed by Nicholas Meyer (who also helmed the best in the series, "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan"), this supposed valedictory for the original cast has tons of pastiche and not enough pep. Trusting the wisdom of Spock (Leonard Nimoy), the Federation (read "free world") selects Captain Kirk (William Shatner) to escort a contingent of Klingons (read "Soviets") to a peace conference (read "end of Cold War"). But as Spock's ancestor, Sherlock Holmes, might have said, there's sabotage afoot. There's also a parade of references to the Klingons' favorite bard, William Shakespeare. The allusion-mongering soars only when the full-throated Klingons played by David Warner and Christopher Plummer brush up their Shakespeare over dinner with Kirk and crew. Plummer's bellicose General Chang promises to become one of the worthiest of the starship Enterprise's opponents, rivalling Ricardo Montalban's Khan. So it's deflating that instead of juicy confrontations between Kirk and Chang, Meyer delivers a silly exercise in crime detection, and a trip to Klingon Siberia. Besides the regular company (DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Nichelle Nichols, George Takei, Walter Koenig), there's an impressive, diverse array of supporting players, including Rosana DeSoto, Kim Cattrall, Kurtwood Smith, John Schuck, and Iman, who's wittily cast as a shape-changer. Meyer and Denny Martin Flinn wrote the script, from a story worked up by Nimoy, Lawrence Konner, and Mark Rosenthal.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, U. A. East, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Strangers in Good Company—It takes a skilled, intuitive filmmaker to give audiences the illusion—and the pleasures—of unstructured time. That's what first-time feature director Cynthia Scott does in this unusual, documentary-flavored portrait of seven senior women and a female tour-bus driver stranded in the gorgeous, unpopulated Mont Tremblant region of Quebec. Scott uses non-professional performers and draws on their real lives to flesh out this enticingly calm survival drama. The movie's laid-back bliss compensates for its poky, awkward spots. Scott's attitude toward old age is restorative. She doesn't turn her heroines into spiritual icons. Their stamina and senses may have diminished, but experience hasn't smoothed the edges off their characters. As they bond in a persuasive, unforced way, their thoughts and feelings about spouses, children, jobs, and their own self-images trickle or spill out. The movie is an Indian-summer harvest of offhand, unexpected insights and overviews. Michelle Sweeney is the bus driver; the seniors are Alice Diabo, Constance Garneau, Winifred Holden, Cissy Meddings, Mary Meigs, Catherine Roche, and Beth Webber. The script is credited to Gloria Demers, Scott, David Wilson, and Sally Bochner. David de Volpi did the balmy, serene cinematography. A National Film Board of Canada Production.—M.S. (Cinema Village 12th Street; starting Jan. 10.)

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THE NEW YORKER

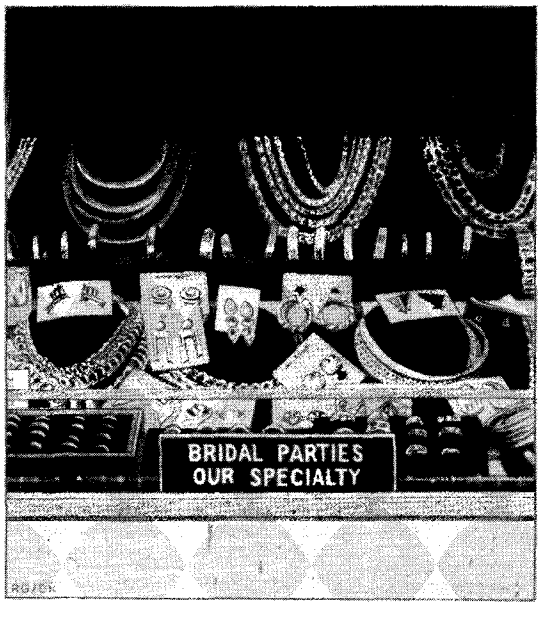
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV's fall from power inspired many commentators to take his historical measure, and the nature of the occasion seemed to encourage a focus on his missteps and shortcomings. Zbigniew Brzezinski, appearing as a guest on "The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour," gave Gorbachev credit for "the peaceful dismantling of the Soviet totalitarian system" but added that this "historical triumph" was also "his personal tragedy," because it was "something he did not intend." Brzezinski went on to compare Gorbachev unfavorably with Boris Yeltsin. "He wanted to reform the system, improve it, make it more decent, more humane, more palatable," Brzezinski said of Gorbachev. "And the efforts to do so drove him towards more and more ambitious reforms, but it was still reforms of the system. Yeltsin somewhere, at some point, recognized that the system could not be reformed . . . and I think this is why Yeltsin today is on top and Gorbachev is out."

With Gorbachev's resignation and the formal dissolution of the country he ruled, the world seemed to have turned a corner. But the comments of Brzezinski and others suggested that it may be a while before most of us are able to sort through the changes of the last half decade without becoming disoriented. How easy it is to forget, for example, that in 1985, when Gorbachev was named General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, there was no "democratic opposition"—the political milieu that gave rise to Yeltsin as we know him now. The remaking of Soviet society was at first almost a one-man undertaking: it consisted of Gorbachev and a handful of confidants. Yeltsin—not a member of this original inner circle—had been a provincial Party leader noted for a strong, but hardly unique, aversion to corruption. Brought to Moscow by Gorbachev, he was one of a second wave of reformers, who gradually developed their courage under his wing. Today, besides being the President of Russia, Yeltsin is a fast-track free-marketeer, and in this incarnation, as in his former one, he has a movement behind him. Insofar as there was a movement behind Gorbachev, it was one that dared not speak its name.

The process that produced Gorbachev is still only sketchily understood. One fairly recent revelation—an autobiographical detail he did not publicly allude to until the year before last—is that both his grandfathers were arrested under Stalin, and that before the Communist Party would accept him as a member he was required to explain (and presumably to dissociate himself from) the crimes of his mother's father. We know also that as a young prosecutor in the early nineteen-fifties Gorbachev formed a scornful view of Party careerists ("When you look at one of the local bosses you see nothing outstanding apart from his belly," he wrote to his wife, Raisa), and that in private conversations with his intimates he expressed views that, as Eduard Shevardnadze has written, "went beyond the boundaries of prescribed norms." But how he managed to keep his youthful detachment alive while rising through the ranks of one of the most cynical bureaucracies ever known—how he fashioned himself into General Secretary material on the outside without surrendering what was inside—is a mystery that sets him apart not only from Yeltsin but from politicians the world over.



Gorbachev's detractors have characterized him as a "reforming czar" in the tradition of Alexander II, who freed the serfs but remained basically loyal to his upbringing. It is true that Gorbachev started out with no more than a broad commitment to two ideals—greater freedom and an economy unshackled from central control—which in his mind were not incompatible with Communist Party rule and with continued reverence for Lenin and the Revolution. But when events suggested otherwise he improvised new positions that enabled the process of reform to go on; he did not fall into the familiar pattern of imperial reformers who have recoiled in horror and resorted to

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the instruments of repression when matters started getting out of hand.

Historians have a habit of reassessing (and usually reducing) the credit given to "great men" for achievements that their contemporaries have attributed to them. Many people have already said that economic desperation and the firmness of the Western military alliance compelled—or, at any rate, strongly encouraged—Gorbachev to chart a new course. In coming years, this list of contributing forces will probably be extended: some may argue that the fossilization of the Party élite had become too much of a national embarrassment for someone coming along when Gorbachev did to carry on in the old style; others may suggest that various thaws and exchanges and breakthroughs in communications technology had made too many Soviet citizens aware of the reality of life in the West and, by reflection, the reality of Soviet life. But even if the end of the Soviet system comes to be regarded as a less extraordinary thing than its endurance for seventy years, it is hard to imagine that its *peaceful* end will not continue to seem miraculous.

The customary route by which world leaders achieve greatness has been by taking their countries to war and leading them to victory. Gorbachev took his country away from war, or from a state of readiness for war, and ended what amounted to a military occupation of its own territories. And he accomplished this, for the most part, with the grudging acquiescence of the most backward elements in the ruling apparatus of his society. He was not a leader who, like Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill, inspired and rallied his own people. His most important work was with the old guards of the K.G.B., the military, and the Party, whom in crisis after crisis he managed to keep at bay while the country grew further accustomed to the ideas of democratization and demilitarization. (Last August's coup was the exception that highlighted the rule.)

Gorbachev's preoccupation with the hard-liners subjected him to widespread criticism, but it was at the heart of his greatness. If, as Brzezinski said, Gorbachev presided over the dismantling of the Soviet system, the task was like a game of pick-up-sticks, in which every move had to be made with the utmost delicacy. In his seven years as leader of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had a strong hand not only in his own country's liberation and that of Eastern Europe but also in the Third World's escape from manipulation by the superpowers and in the curtailment of the arms race. He freed our own country—though we have yet to really seize the opportunities bestowed on us—to reallocate resources to peaceful purposes and, equally important, to measure itself by some loftier standard than the Soviet example.

One place where Gorbachev's talents failed him—where he had a theory but was largely unable to put it into practice—was the Soviet economy. The last two years brought the worst hardships in recent Soviet history, and Gorbachev's popularity plummeted to "single digits," according to some recent newspaper assessments. On "MacNeil/Lehrer" the night of his resignation, a group of young Russian journalism students tore into Gorbachev for the timidity of his economic policies. But, as the turmoil set off by Russia's decision to decontrol prices has now made clear, Gorbachev had reason to be uneasy, and it may be that no leader could have done much with the Soviet economy in such a short time.

In his brief farewell address, which was severely maligned in his own country, Gorbachev displayed an honesty and plainspokenness that were exceptional. "We had a lot of everything—land, oil, and gas, other natural resources—and there was intellect and talent in abundance," he said, recalling the situation of the Soviet Union at the time of his accession. "However, we were living much worse than people in the industrialized countries were living. . . . This country was suffocating in the shackles of the bureaucratic command system. Doomed to cater to ideology, and suffer and carry the onerous burden of the arms race, it found itself at the breaking point." That same day, President Bush, in a speech of tribute to Gorbachev, alluded to the current economic woes of the United States merely as "challenges here at home."

Americans have a weakness for "great" men, and sometimes we have been all too ready to impart greatness to people who have not borne up well under sustained examination. In the case of Gorbachev, though, it may be his detractors who lack a sense of perspective. Why do we need to diminish the greatness of someone who owns up to his society's errors instead of asserting its superiority, and who accomplishes things with patient prodding instead of with bluster and force?

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Flourishing

EVERY once in a while, an American arrives in Paris and the French, instead of merely correcting his pronunciation, for some reason clasp him to their bosom and turn him into a national hero. This happened to Benjamin Franklin, and now it has happened to Bill Christie, a musician from upstate: he left a junior-faculty teaching job at Dartmouth in the early seventies to go to Paris and look for work as a harpsichord player and has ended up as probably the most revered master of old French music in France.

William Christie, as he is officially known, is the director of a vocal and instrumental group called Les Arts Florissants, which has, improbably, managed to take a musical repertoire —the sacred and profane music of the French Baroque—that had been effectively defunct for two centuries, and win from it a series of sold-out concerts, rapturous reviews, and best-selling records. In New York, the reputation of Les Arts Florissants has been growing slowly, but the group recently made a deal with the people at the Brooklyn Academy of Music to come over regularly and sing and play Baroque opera, and its first BAM concert, on November 20th—a program of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's sacred mu-

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sic, including his "Te Deum," his "Assumpta Est Maria" Mass, and some of his Christmas music—was sold out. The *Times* critic described the performance of the Mass as "the most seductive and sensuous example of sacred music" that he had ever heard.

The morning after the concert, Bill Christie, who was staying on Central Park West with his friends Barry and Claire Brook—Barry is a musicologist who is responsible for some of the crucial transcriptions and editions of the French eighteenth-century repertory, and Claire is the music editor for W. W. Norton—got up early and, over toast (no croissants) and coffee, talked with a couple of music lovers about how it was that an upstate harpsichord player had become a French national hero. "What a long tour this is!" he said happily. "Strasbourg, Lyons, Caen, Palermo, Como, Rome, now New York, then Washington—it's a joy. I'm very happy with the group that sang last night—I feel very close to that group. You see, Les Arts Florissants isn't simply a set group. Instead, it's a pool of about fifty singers and instrumentalists whom we can call on, depending on the demands of the piece and the tour. We're a little band, a colony, that grew over the years. It all started in the late seventies. I was trying to find music that was French, and music that was right for a small number of performers, since that was all we had, and, above all, music that seemed young—youthful. And it was serendipitous that so much of Charpentier's music seemed to fit. It was right for young singers—not difficult—and he had written much of it when he was young, so it felt, and sang, youthful. At the time, there were only two pieces of his in the repertoire—the 'Midnight Mass for Christmas' and the 'Te Deum'—and both were known only in highly modernized versions. It was thrilling to rediscover the rest of his music, one masterpiece after another. For a while, every night was a twentieth-century début of something.

"I was born up in Buffalo, and after high school I went off to Harvard, and learned especially what I didn't want to do. Then I went to the Yale Music School to study harpsichord with Ralph Kirkpatrick, an extraordinary and difficult man, who turned out to be an awful teacher. He eventually disavowed me, but I stayed at Yale for three years and then went to Dartmouth to teach music history. I loved teaching, and I loved the kids, but Dartmouth didn't renew my contract, and it turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me. In the early seventies, I found myself without a job—a feckless harpsichord player, in Europe, along with a bunch of European and American early- and contemporary-music sorts who were all looking for work. There were an American countertenor, a Dutch cellist, an Italian-American soprano. We had no money—nothing except a love of music, and a determination to perform it in an absolutely vital way, with all the dust shaken off, and without a single musical mothball. I went from Rome to London and then to Paris, and I fell in love with Paris. I made my first solo harpsichord record, and then I began to make a few small records with Nigel Rogers and René Jacobs and other early-music people. I could hardly speak French—I'm not vastly better now, truly—and I lived in mortal fear of ringing an operator or of having to go and buy socks in a department store. I discovered, though, that the French like anyone who makes an effort in terms of their own culture, and, once they discovered that I loved their music, they loved me.

"The success of Les Arts Florissants is still a little stunning even to me, but I think it comes from the fact that, although many people are performing this repertory now, we have evolved a distinct aesthetic. It has to do primarily with a linguistic approach to music. I like libretti to communicate to an audience immediately, to help the music have an immediate emotional appeal, for it's emotional music that we sing. People think of Baroque music as being distanced, or remote, because it's distant from us, but that's just the opposite of how it should be performed. Baroque art, after all, ought to involve a direct appeal to the senses—that is, it should be theatrical, and not frigid. Think of Bernini!

"Sometimes when we're struggling to find our way into a new piece, I'll search for some modern equivalent of that kind of inspiriting rhetoric, the kind of high stylization that releases, rather than restrains, emotion—the infectious enthusiasm of Fred and

"You kids looking for an apartment?"

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Ginger, perhaps. Or Disney! When we began our first rehearsal of 'Les Arts Florissants'—the little Charpentier opera from which the group takes its name, and which has a seemingly absurd libretto, full of silly, high-strung mythical personages—I told the singers to think of the dancing hippos in 'Fantasia.' "

A musician on the run, Christie gulped down his coffee, grabbed his bag, and, holding in the other hand a bottle of cognac, a gift for his next host (he has many friends, and dislikes hotels), went downstairs and hailed a cab to take him to Penn Station and the ten-o'clock Metroliner to Washington (he loves trains, hates planes). On the way to the station, he said, "You know, the most wonderful moment of my life happened not long ago, when we filled the Salle Favart, in Paris, to celebrate an Arts Florissants anniversary, and everyone who had performed with the group came in costume, in the Baroque manner, and we were all linked together by this wonderful métier. It was a kind of paradise, for a moment. It was also a *soirée bon enfant*, as the French say—literally, a good child's night, I believe."

Sic Transit

A FRIEND of ours on the Upper West Side writes:

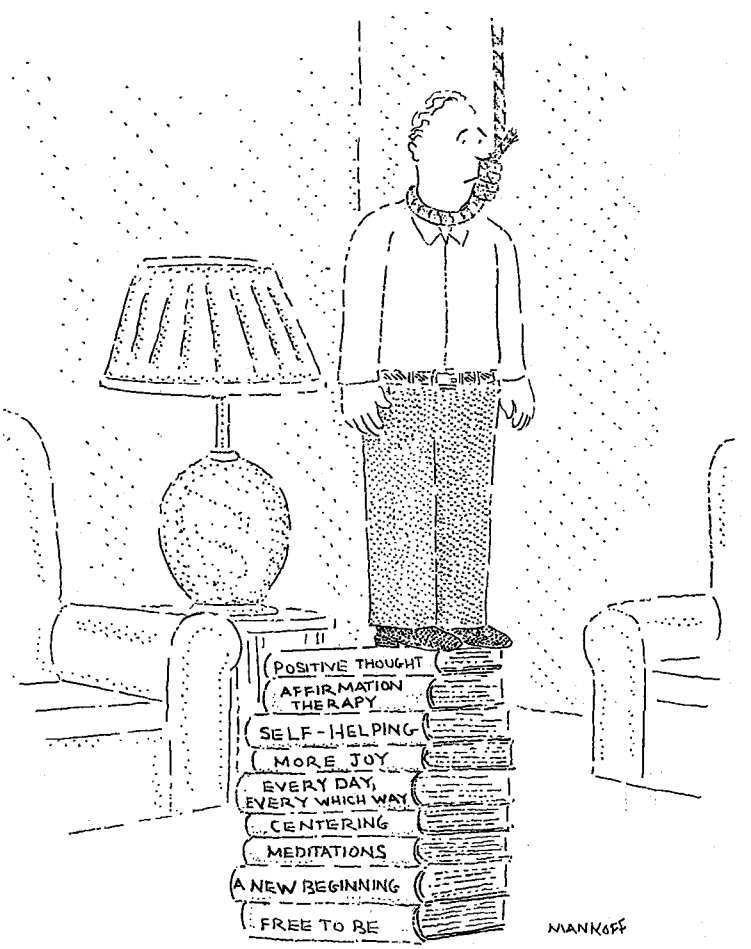
Those damn cassettes in the video store and the damn VCR and the hungry thirty-two-inch TV and the four speakers I bought to give me movie-theatre sound in my own not very large apartment—the sheer bulk of my own home-entertainment center—are waiting for me. I had no idea what being *entertained* was really like. You have to know what you're seeing, did you know that? The names of the stars, the director, the supporting actors, the cameraman, the scriptwriter. You have to know the history of film and the history of each film you see—it's worse than going to the ballpark. For baseball and football, you have to know the names of the team owners and the general managers and the managers, but for film you have to know the studio heads, the major New York money men, and the personal quality and creative smarts of the studio's executive producers.

In what movie did Garbo wear Gable's pajamas, and use a voice in a lower register than his? What movie first parodied Paul Henried's lighting two cigarettes at once—first parodied it in a genuinely funny way? What is "Casablanca" actually about? (True love means sending Ingrid Bergman away?) Is the line "Shane, come back" or just "Shane, Shane"? In two hundred words or less, indicate the differences between Capra, Sturges, Ophuls, Lubitsch, and Hawks in the making of world-famous, time-conquering comedies.

But you also have to know about now. Is Winona Ryder really good? Can Laura Dern do comedy? Is Tom Cruise a real star? Compare Scorsese with Kurosawa. Compare Scorsese with Kurosawa in the light of the movies each has made after he was forty. O.K.? Then, do you know how to position your television screen? Can you produce room-surround sound (is that term trademarked?), and how do you feel about panavision (should that be capitalized?) on the small screen?

O.K., you come up out of the subway or you get off a bus or out of a taxi, or a car service drops you off, and you're carrying a briefcase or a book bag or an attaché case or a Sportsac—who the hell knows what you're carrying. You're weighted down, and you stop in at the video store for an hour of choosing what will divert, engross, soothe you, hold you breathless and helpless for ninety minutes or more. This reminds me: Why does advertising for entertainment always suggest bondage, captivity of mind, passivity? Can't the audience ever hold the cassette captive? The figures show, by the way, that after you have owned a VCR for three years your movie watching levels off or else falls off drastically. And we all know what happened to book reading, and to rock and roll—*live* rock and roll.

So you enter the video store and start contemplating your choice of the evening's visual and intellectual and emotional bondage: the stars, the plots, the costumes, the moods. And here is your neighbor—perhaps from your very own high rise—mindlessly staring as well. Here are couples browsing the racks, and mothers with little kids in strollers, and adolescent kids sniffing at their future, trying to sense what's ahead for them. And you are immersed in very bright overhead light—*very* bright—and your head fills with the hyperventilated prose of the blurbs on the cassettes: all that knowingly wrought excitement, all of it proposing captivity to further excitement. If you don't make up your mind before you get there about what movie—or, at least, what sort of



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movie—you want to see, it can take a giant bite out of an evening to track your way through all the categories: horror films, comedies, opera and ballet, recent foreign films, classic foreign films, undubbed foreign films, and then adventure, mystery, children's, and X-rated, straight and "other."

Meanwhile, the television sets in the windows are playing, and two sets inside the store are showing movies with the sound turned very low. On the walls are offers for so many Disney movies at such-and-such a price—to silence the kids. Out on the sidewalk are little knots of people staring for a while at the movies on the sets in the windows while traffic passes feverishly behind them.

The store I'm speaking of was called the Video Vault. It has gone out of business, and its proprietors have opened separate stores—one a block away from the original, the other two blocks away. Near here, Woody Allen—in "Annie Hall," was it?—pulled Marshall McLuhan from behind a poster in the lobby of the old New Yorker Theatre. Upper Broadway defines itself in terms of movie theatres. For instance, when you give someone directions you say, "A block north of the Metro Twin." Part of living in New York is keeping track of entertainment one way or another: arguing about it with a sort of New York expertise that may be slowly winding down, perhaps only for the moment, perhaps for good—arguments about whether it's better to see dance from the balcony or from the orchestra, or whether it's better to watch television in black-and-white or in color, or on a large set or a small one, and arguments over where to sit in Carnegie Hall to best hear the throb of the brass and of the violins, the squeak of piccolos.

The dreamlike hours inside the Video Vault remain vivid and weird to me. Discussions and thumbnail reviews of movies when two people were looking for a movie to rent: "Oh, that's not sexy enough." "I'm not sad enough for that one." "I can't take another faded Technicolor epic, Jack." "I'm mad for Carole Lombard. I think it's Carole Lombard—I get her mixed up with Jean Arthur." The intense cleverness of momentary moguls here, aficionados of the bondage of engrossment. The celluloid garden, maybe. For a while, the store had a number of volumes of reviews of movies on the checkout counters, along with catalogues, and people would quote the reviews and catalogues to each other.

"You know what X says about Minnelli's 'Madame Bovary'? God, it's good!"

"The movie?"

"*No*, the *remark*."

On the walls, lists of movies soon to be released on video could be read mostly as lists of movies that had failed in the theatres. Movie posters on the walls were mostly for movies that hadn't come in yet—I mean as videos. This led to an little local corruption: hidden waiting lists for new releases and little bribes to get to the head of those lists.

I used to like overhearing questions from the people working there—the staff—to customers asking for advice: "Do you like to be scared? That stuff is O.K. with you?" "You like dubbed or undubbed?" "You like the kind of satires with a lot of violence at the end?"

It was part of one's ordinary life, and then it was gone with the wind, sayonara. It was closed down. The windows were dark, the shelves empty. Someone from my building saw me pause in front of the dark windows of the defunct Video Vault and said, "Have you noticed how short eras are getting to be lately?" Of course, maybe he was talking about the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Or yesterday's real-estate boom.

"I don't get mad—I get even."

• •

Lately, an era of one kind or another seems to be ending daily. As I said, two smaller video stores, each of which looks like the old one, have appeared in the neighborhood. One is called Video To-Go, and the other—shades of Götterdämmerung—is called Sunset Video. The two owners, the former owners of the Vault, go up and down the sidewalk, often across the street from each other's new store, to study each other's window posters and to see what crowds are inside. I saw one of them stooping on the sidewalk at twilight and tying his shoe—it had been years since I'd seen anyone tie his shoe on the street—and watching the lights of the other store.

Once, in a fit of nostalgia, I asked a kid in the Video Vault for the now ancient M-G-M musical "Naughty Marietta," with Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, and he headed toward the X-rated section. This neighborhood is urban, and skewed in a lot of ways by being urban, and even if someone talks to you, you never know more than a little portion of any story. But movies pretend to have beginnings and middles and ends, and that is nice. Meanwhile, Souen, a health food restaurant, has become Mana. Charivari has closed its men's store and been replaced not by a grocery store but by a modern sort of—oh, food dealership, Broadway Farm. Broadway Farm!

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THE WEDDING OF HENRY MARKOWITZ

Henry Markowitz sits at the oval claw-foot table, expandable to seat twelve—his find at a Wantage estate sale, a jewel of Victoriana, refinished down to its griffin feet. It's big, but it's the table he always wanted, and that's why he bought it. He simply hired piano movers. The flat is full of his discoveries, his rare books, and his antique decanters. There is a special case for his maps, his charts of the heavens. He designed it and had it built by a cabinetmaker. Everything fits; the colors are warm library hues, deep green and cinnabar.

"Describe the expression on her face," Henry says to his younger brother, Ed.

"Flabbergasted," Ed says. "Ma was completely taken aback. Well, we were all so surprised. I mean, to hear you were *engaged!* Ma was in shock! But we were so pleased." He looks at Henry. "Well, I mean, what do you want to know?"

"I just wondered how she looked," Henry says, fidgeting with the place cards on the table.

"Oh," Ed says. "Well."

"Tell me about your work. How is the book coming?"

"What, the anthology?"

"No, no—your history of the Arabic-speaking peoples."

"That was fifteen years ago, Henry!" Ed says with some annoyance. "I haven't worked on that for fifteen years."

"That long?" Henry says. "What a shame. I was thinking about it just the other day. There was an exhibit of Persian miniatures at the Ashmolean, and I was thinking about your book, your idea about the art and politics—the art especially. It's so rich—the compression, the landscape, and the men with their swords, and a waterfall like a thread into an oasis, all in one little frame. They were like jewels. You've got to go back to it; you could just do the art, you know. Even if you just did the art—"

"Well, I'm not an art historian," Ed says. "And I'm not Albert Hourani, either. I just do the best I can."

Henry looks at him and feels flustered. "What do you think of these?" he asks, holding up the place cards. "We had the calligrapher who did the addresses for the invitations. The printing was a nightmare, of course. There are scarcely any engravers left. Would you believe invitations these days are nearly all done thermally? Run your finger over the verso and you can feel the difference."

"Huh." Ed stares at him, head propped up on his fist. He has been flying most of the night and isn't acclimated to Oxford in June—the birds singing at four-thirty in the morning and the searing blue sky.

"Won't you have some coffee?" Henry asks him. "Some tea? Earl Grey? Black currant? How was Yehudit's graduation?"

"It was fine," Ed says. "It was beautiful. It rained. Here, I brought you pictures." He takes out the snapshots of his daughter, of the family under umbrellas.

"Oh, it looks like it was *pouring*," Henry says. "Oh, the poor thing—she looks drenched. Those umbrellas! My God, what if it rains at the reception? We checked the almanacs, of course, for the chances. Oh, look at Sarah with that plastic bag over her hair!"

Ed is gazing out at Henry's living room, at his brocaded armchairs and his stacks of books. Leather-bound quartos, damp and a little ragged. The huge dark table stretches through the living room, grotesquely out of scale.

"And these are the sibs!" Henry bursts out, holding a photo before him. "They're huge!"

"They're—they're twenty-three and twenty-five years old," Ed splutters.

"Really! I had forgotten they were so old. The time just, just— Are you angry at me?"

"What's to be angry at? I'm jet-lagged, can't you see that? I get on the plane at Dulles, and here you are in the same apartment with these little books and these chairs—these *things* of yours."

Henry flushes to the tip of his nose.

"Well, I'm sorry," Ed says. "I thought by now you'd know the ages of my children."

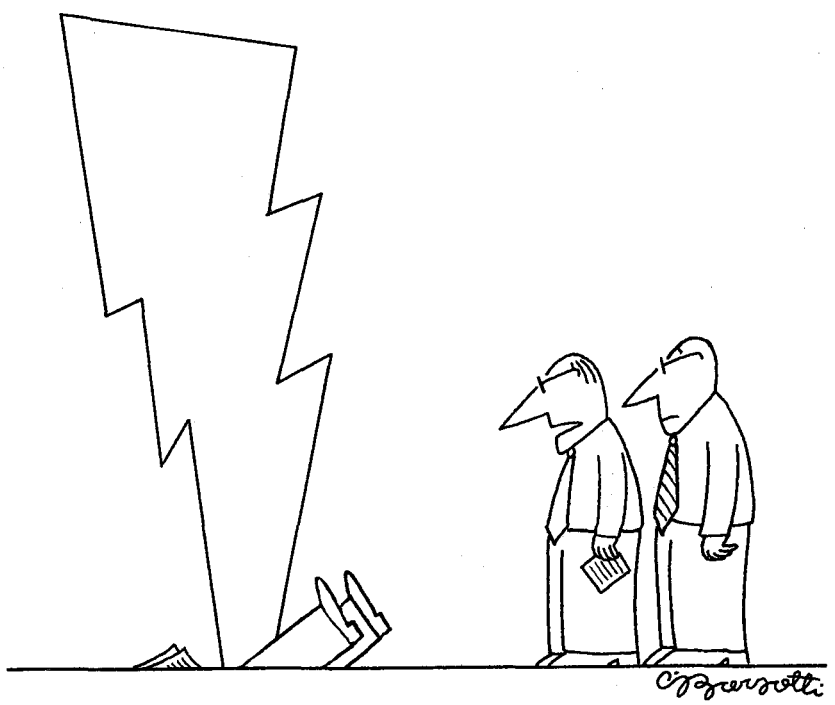
"I *did* know," Henry protests. "I used to know. I lost track!"

"Well, we're all supposed to keep track of you," Ed snaps. "We just picked up and schlepped across the Atlantic on two months' notice."

"Don't be upset," Henry says.

"I'm not upset. I'm trying to tell you it wasn't easy for us to get here, let alone bring Mother. Sarah and I have *very* complex schedules. I'm overextended, I've got papers promised, I've got a conference in July with half the funding gone, since the Institute went belly up. I've got graduate students covering my classes right now. Sarah is missing her conference completely."

"I'm sorry," Henry says.



"That's it. I'm taking the buyout."

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"It's O.K.," says Ed. "I just want you to see. We don't just pop over to Oxford—"

"I know," Henry says. "And I'm grateful, Edward."

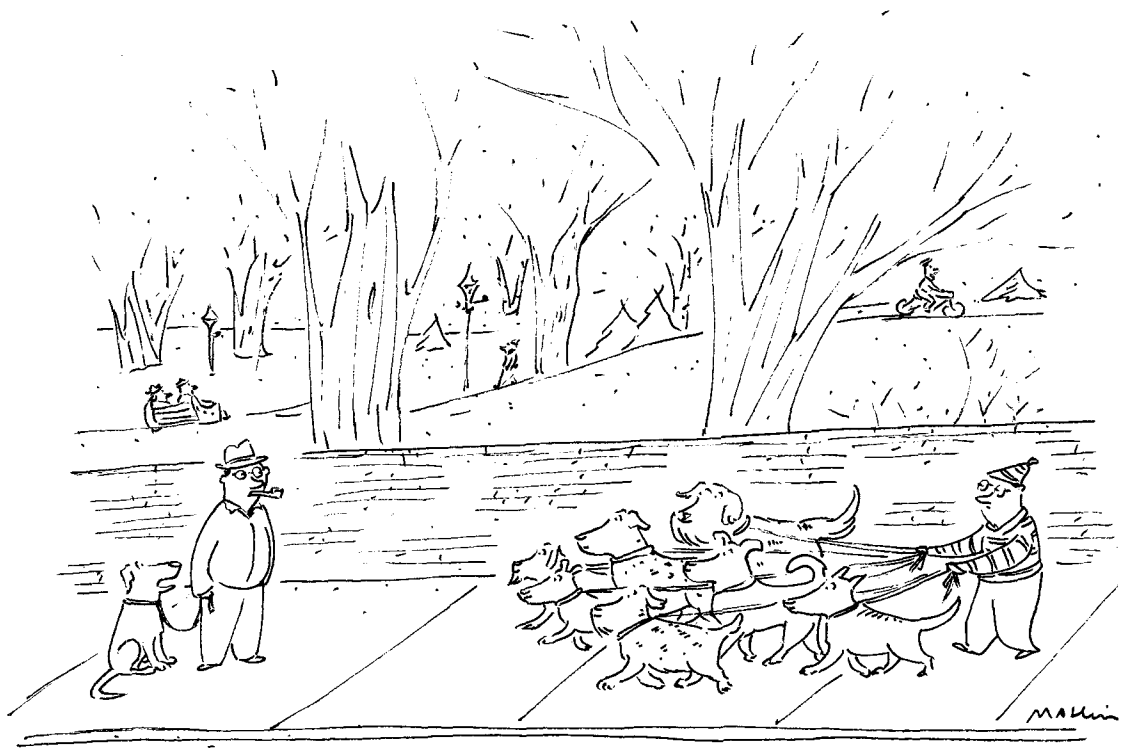
"So don't talk to me about paper!" Ed bursts out.

"What paper?"

"Just stop with the paper; that's all I ask."

"I was talking about engraving," Henry says. "I thought it would interest you."

"All right. O.K., look—" Ed stares at Henry's grandfather clock. In the clock case a gold moon shines against a background of midnight blue.



"Better let me do all the talking."

• •

HENRY watches from the window as the rented Ford Fiesta lurches off, scattering gravel. He and his brother have not become close friends. Periodically they write letters, but there is always this barrier: Edward can never imagine him as a human being, not as he really is. He's always insulting Henry's collections, his passions for art and manuscripts and rare editions. Edward looks down on him for leaving America. But, of course, Edward is part of it all—what America has become. Those sprawling universities Henry has left behind. America, with its mass-produced undergraduates processed through seedy lecture halls where, under flickering lights, they slump with their knees up and take in lectures as they might see movies. Where the familiar passes into the wide pupils of their eyes and the rest dribbles down the aisles to collect with the dirt and candy wrappers at the professor's feet. Has he not been a professor at Queens College and then N.Y.U.? And the graduate students. Hasn't he seen them at Princeton clustering at the office doors? Young Calibans eager for praise. They can tear open the Italian Renaissance before lunch, strangle a Donne sonnet and crush its wings, battering away with blunt instruments. As for the older scholars—like students at a cooking school, they cook up Shakespeare, serve him up like roast goose, stuffed with their political-sexual agendas, carve and quarter him with long knives. For Henry, reading had always been a gentle thing, a thing as delicate as blowing eggs. Two pinpricks and the meaning came, whole, unbroken, into the bowl. Now reading is a boiling and a breaking, something to concoct. It's a devilling of art, history, social theory, politics—all mixed and piped back in and served up on a platter. These are the scholars in the journals now. They are at war with the beautiful; they are against God and metaphor. They deny, as Edward does, all of what Henry believes; in fact, all that he lives for: texture and artistry. And Edward is more than a part of it. He has become a shaper himself of the tawdry yellow thing they sell now as the Humanities. The cheapening of craft and light, intuition and sensibility, into the Social Sciences. Edward had begun as a Near Eastern historian and now is nothing more than a political expert. Another cog in the grant-getting, TV-interview machine.

Henry has left all of that—the academic mills, the illusion that scholarship can persist in those ugly industrial institutions. He got his business degree and left the country to live like a human being: manager of Laura Ashley by day, artistic impresario by night, amidst the bells and turrets of a true university, with gentle old walls, lichen-covered and printed with season after season of lilacs and the thick, corded stems of roses. He walks in the deep silence of these courtyards, especially in the weeks in September, when the tourists have faded but the late flowers still bloom in their second and third ranks under the mullioned windows, and especially in March, before the students have returned from vacation and the willows begin to show pale green—those last weeks in September and March when Oxford is completely his own.

But Edward can never see any of this. He is immune to it, and it means nothing to him. He's caught in the American rituals. Food, kids, cars, commercials. How could one expect Edward to look up from his devouring and enter into the wedding? Henry paces into the kitchen and mists his African violet. He counts to ten, simply because he can't allow himself to get upset.

THE suite in the Old Parsonage Hotel has dark-green curtains, and Ed draws them closed and sinks

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down on the bed beside his wife. "Where's Mother?" he asks.

"End of the hall. Taking a hot bath." Sarah closes her eyes again. "How is he?" she asks him.

"Same as ever."

"And what about her?"

"Who?"

"The bride. Ed?"

"I don't know, she's fine. She wasn't there; she was working."

Sarah rolls over and looks at him. "What did you talk about?"

"We talked about him, of course. And his *things*."

"Did you ask him when we're supposed to come tonight?"

"No. Wasn't it eight o'clock?"

"Why didn't you ask him?"

Ed sighs. "Because he amazes me. Because I walk into his apartment and he's still doing 'Brideshead Revisited,' with those brocades and those clocks! Those rotting leather bindings. His eighteenth-century *peklach*!"

"Oh, stop."

"And that ridiculous table. I'm not going to make it, Sarah." Ed swings his laptop onto the bed and unzips the case.

Sarah says, "I think it's sad that you can't just—"

"Have a normal conversation with him?"

"No, I meant just lighten up. This is your only brother getting married."

"So to speak." Ed fiddles with the keyboard, as if he were typing up the book review that was due a month ago.

"What do you mean?" Sarah asks.

"You know what I mean."

"Oh, come out and say it," she says. "You've got such an attitude, Ed. It's unbelievable."

"Well, it's so obvious," he exclaims. "You thought so, too. For years."

"Not necessarily," says Sarah, who is a writer of fiction and believes in change, secrets, and revelations.

The last time they were in Oxford was ten years ago, when Ed lectured at the Wantage Center—the Oxford Center for Peace in the Middle East. Henry had them over for dinner and cooked everything with heavy cream. The kids were sick, Ed turned green trying to make conversation, Ed and Henry's mother, Rose, took a glass of Drambuie and fell asleep. And there they all were. They've seen Henry since then, in Washington; and he's had his turn feeling ill, looking up with mournful eyes from their clamorous dinner table all sprawled over with teenagers. He wrote them letters, as well. "There is a pale gold in the walls," he would write, "and towards evening a kind of glow in the stone—the kind of color one glimpses in the last flicker of sun on the river—the last lingering warmth of the day, such a poignance, and the tracery so frail, the stained glass in Corpus Christi like the last glowing embers of a fire, the last opalescent, bluest flame." And Sarah would write back, speaking for the family, "Ben is at band camp and Ed may now have the grant application in on time." They kept up the correspondence, as the two letter writers of the family. It was a strange match. The lyrical, if sometimes muddled, estuaries of Henry's fountain pen and the updates from Sarah's Uni-Ball. Ed rolled his eyes at Henry's letters, and the kids groaned when they heard them, but Sarah kept some of them. The truth was she liked them. She'd had all that kind of writing beaten out of her in workshops, but she secretly liked it. Once when she went to pick up Ed at Georgetown she stopped and watched for the last light on the tracery. It was too early in the evening, however.

"I'm not up for a four-hour dinner," Ed tells her.

"It starts at eight?"

"I said I don't know."

"I said you have to call him and ask," Sarah reminds him.

"I'm taking a nap."

There is a knock at the door as Ed takes off his pants.

"It's your mother," Sarah says.

"I am aware of that," Ed says, and he puts his pants back on again.

Rose appears at the door in jet-black

THE NEARSIGHTED

who misreads the serious joke, the speech
as everyday speech, the smile as pleasure, the map
as a flat land, sooner for later,

who once could misread "the law," briefly,
as "lawn party," longing perhaps
to see the great at leisure—the great

leisurely great at leisure on a lawn
in its late-summer greens, in their
black robes. No matter. Quickly corrected:

"the law." Takes off her glasses in spring
to see the flowers—*vide* Impressionists—light, air
in the National Arboretum. It is a mass, a confection

of colors, of course: a stroll in perfection. Solemnly
curling new hybrid tulips are only gaiety, planted in thrilling
profusion, variety. Purely a vision. One hill section

of overgrown lawn, beyond a hedge, holds twenty-odd columns
standing transplanted, standing alone, that hold no building.
Once they stood (a sign) at the first Capitol. Benefactions

saved them (a list of donors), to bring them here. Here
freestanding, mis-seen at a distance, the scene could be
scenery for an ancienter demos, dead grandeur. Close,

their Corinthian capitals cast such intricate shadows
down their sides—was it acanthus?—even the nearsighted sees
the Founders' stoneworker's first

intention, a far-off gesture: Yes, we chose
to believe this way. But now, here. The nation's given us
acres. Not so far away, the narcissus

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garden, its near-hidden signs among short leaves, calls
for corrective lenses. It sends its instructive paths
through a polleny wood, telling us, "This

is Our Temple, among the gold-centered
namesakes of Presidents and First Ladies. . . . That's
the frilled Ring Leader . . . Burning Heart . . ." Thus

the bedazzled flower breeders, lovers of Beauty
all—romantics—giving names to what they admired, what we had seen
as glorious, clean, benefaction. Not far off,

the tiny trees of the bonsai garden make each planting
a world. A nearsighted citizen finds six trees
in a foot-wide glade of beeches,

sees its minuscule guest, hears its minuscule
suppliants. Its invisible dryad: "This is pause
I give you, if I can—green hiatus

caught in a stone jar, just this far from magenta-
flowered truce in confusion, absurd azalea."
Foemina Juniper, white-dead branches spires

above a still-green forest—all just
inches tall—holds no natural fauna
the eye can see. The law

requires reason. Across a roadway, beds
of industrial herbs, medicinal herbs, et cetera,
smell as strong as sage. In the virtues of dittany

only the pungent, invisible gods believe. The
nearsighted sees bound water lilies in a popular pool
not far away, the civil golden carp

vague beneath them, and wants to believe there's no great
loss to be seen in this generation, no lost equilibrium, barely
a lost clear lost tradition.

—Elizabeth Macklin

• •

wraparound sunglasses because of her recent cataract operation. "Where is Henry?" she asks, her voice surprisingly strong for her eighty-two years.

"We're meeting him for dinner," Ed says.

"But you were picking him up and bringing him to the hotel."

"He has errands today. Last-minute—"

"Why are we here at the last minute?" Rose sighs.

"I'm already missing a week of school," Ed says. "We discussed this, Ma; remember? And you wouldn't travel by yourself."

"I would have," Rose says.

"Well, that's not what you said before."

"I would have if it meant I could see Henry. If I could have spent time with him."

Ed looks at her. "Well, we discussed this before, and that was not what you said."

"But that's what I was thinking," Rose says. "How can we meet the family three days before? Where is the bride?"

"We're meeting her for dinner," Sarah says.

Rose takes off her sunglasses and snaps them shut with disgust. "What kind of dinner could *that* be? Without any introductions. What kind of thing is that? You go to a wedding to be with the family. You go to meet the community. *You* had a beautiful wedding," she says to Sarah and looks at her so yearningly that Sarah feels she weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds again. "Everyone was there except for the Feldmans and the Richters and Natalie, may she rest in peace, and the Yarchevers." There had been a band that was not to be believed and they all danced so long that Sarah's father, Sol, paid the men for two extra hours. Sarah just floated on Ed's arm, layers and layers of tulle in her gown. She was so slender—and Ed, too; they were twenty-two years old, Ed just three months older. "Apart from that, everyone was there," Rose tells them now, "and they still talk about it. Who is going to remember this wedding?"

"Well, he invited two hundred fifty people," Sarah says.

"But who that we know?" murmurs Rose. "Who? How many? No one."

"I'm going to take a nap now," Ed says.

After Rose goes back to her room and they lie down, the phone rings. Ed realizes he has a splitting headache.

"Hello?" Sarah answers.

"Hello, it's Rose. Tell me her name again."

"Susan McPhearson."

"I know that; I mean the spelling."

Sarah spells it for her.

"That's not a Jewish name," Rose says.

"It's not a Jewish person, Ma," Ed calls out. He can hear Rose's voice over the receiver.

"You tell Ed," Rose says to Sarah on the phone, "that there are a lot of women and gentlemen in this world pretending they are what they are not."

"I don't think anyone's pretending," Sarah ventures.

"Fine," Rose says. "Remember, I told you about the Winston couple on the Alaska cruise. At the Chopin concert I met the couple, last name Winston. I looked at this old gentleman. Winston? Never. A Weinstein. 'Where are you from?' 'Tenafly, New Jersey.' 'But where were you from before that?' He admits originally he was from Vienna; he'll only go so far, you know. So during the intermission I speak to him with my good *Hochdeutsch*. We all spoke *very* good German, growing up. He and I and Mrs. Winston become friendly. We sit down again, and this young pianist, this young boy, begins banging the Chopin—it went right through my head, because he had no feeling for the music, not the slightest understanding. So I lean over to this old gentleman—Winston, as he calls himself—and I whisper in Yiddish, referring to the pianist: '*Vos veist a chazer fun lukshen*?' What does

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a pig know about egg noodles? He nods his head. Weinstein! That's how I caught him and his *Hochdeutsch*. He understood Yiddish perfectly."

Ed grabs the receiver from Sarah. "Susan McPhearson doesn't know Yiddish, Ma."

"Neither do you," Rose points out. "Let me tell you—"

"She's not pretending," Ed says.

"I wasn't just thinking of her," Rose says. "There's also Henry."

"WHAT do you think she meant by that?" Ed asks Sarah after he hangs up the phone. "That Henry is pretending?"

Sarah looks up at the ceiling. They are lying together on the bed. "That he's pretending he's English, I guess."

"Oh, he's been doing that for years," Ed says. "I really think she's wondering what he's doing taking up with a woman after all this time."

"All this time? You don't have the slightest idea how he's been living. You barely looked at his letters."

"He never said anything in his letters."

"Yes, he did," Sarah protests. "Just because they were all about bridges over the river—"

"The wind in the willows and the antiquarian book sales at Fyfield Manor. I think basically this is going to be a companionable marriage."

"Oh, no, it won't be," says Sarah. "They'll go to Stratford, and they'll go punting—"

"Yeah, I can really picture Henry standing up in a punt."

HENRY is at his Laura Ashley office, on the phone with Unwin's about the champagne. He has shopped for the wedding in the European way, at little specialty shops all through town, and he would have done without a caterer altogether if he could; catering seems to him so much like the supermarket approach. As it is, he has the crusty rolls ordered from his own bakery, Mrs. Thomson's Victorian Bakery. He drives there every afternoon for the day's bread, because it is simply the best there is. Mrs. T. uses a brick oven in the wall, with its cast-iron door embossed "Bendick & Peterson, 1932" above a sheaf of wheat. How many times has he asked to watch as Mrs. T. opens that door and slips the loaves out with her paddle? But the cake is being decorated by a specialist. Henry designed it himself. Six tiers in ivory with sprays of lilacs pouring down, all done in royal icing and tinted buttercream. There is a filigree skirt to it, like antique lace traced in sugar. He wouldn't tell Susan how much it cost. "We'll only have a wedding cake once in our lives," he said.

"I never liked sweets," she said, "but I suppose we must eat some *gâteau*." That shocked him; not that Susan didn't like sweets but the idea that their cake would be eaten. He hadn't thought of that at all.

"All right, then," Unwin's assistant says on the phone. "Never fear. We've got all the champagne here in the store, and we'll wheel the bottles in on our hand trucks."

"Around the back?" Henry asks.

"Round the back, sir."

When he gets off the phone he locks the office and finds his assistant, Mary. "Where is Susan's gown?" he asks her.

"She picked it up yesterday," Mary says.

"So she did. I'm a little distracted," he confides. "Just between us." He runs out to the car.

SUSAN is filing papers at her desk. She is assistant registrar at Merton College and knows where everything is. In forest green and an antique shawl, her graying hair pinned up loosely, she flicks off the lights in her little office and closes the door. They are a tall couple, and complement each other. Where Henry's ears and nose are knobby, Susan's face is fine and rather flat. Henry rubs at the last curls on his head and Susan walks on sensibly without fidgeting at all.

"I asked him about his book," Henry says, "and he's given up on it altogether. The good book, the one he was going to write on Arabic thought and art. He's just given up on it, does the political thing now. It's so sad, Susan, so terribly sad, what he's become."

"*He* may like it," Susan points out.

"Oh, I don't think so," Henry says. "How could he? Giving it all up to be some sort of apologist to the media for the P.L.O. or the Arab League. When there was such beauty to uncover, such a history there. And he's just a pardoner—

LITTLE MISS MUFFET DOES LUNCH

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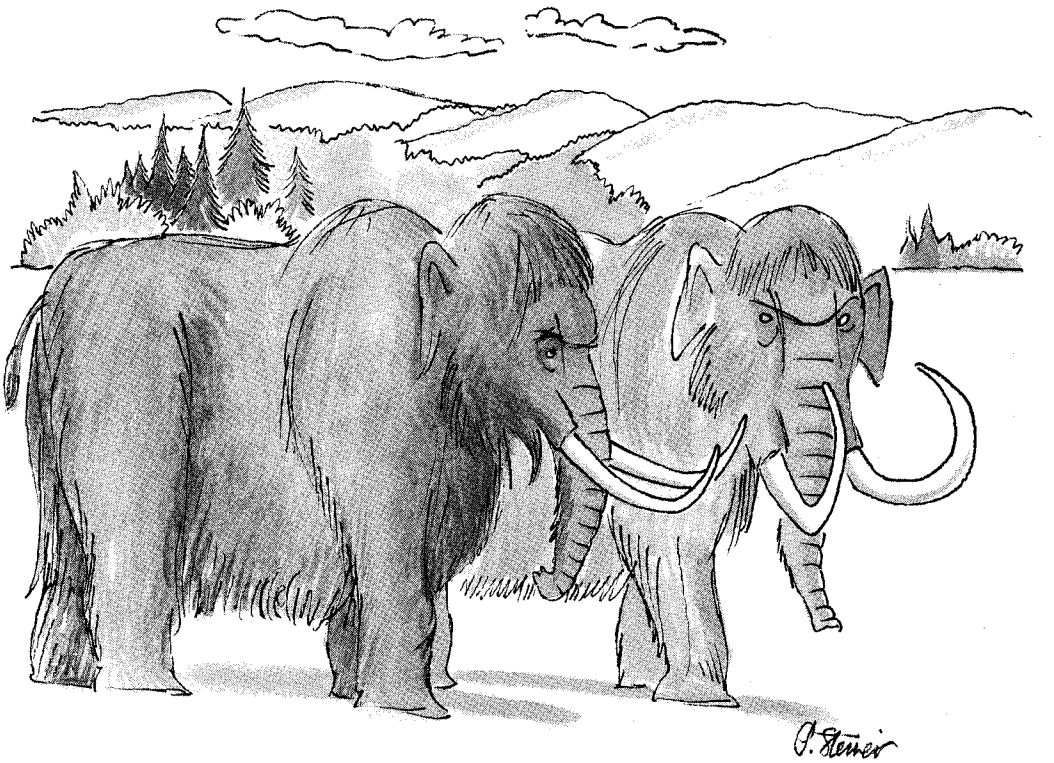
selling indulgences on TV."

"It can't be as bad as all that," Susan says.

"I shouldn't have brought it up with him," Henry sighs, "but that's the problem, you know, there's nothing we can't fight about. We're going to sit there tonight at dinner, and I'll spend three hundred pounds, and what will we say?"

"At Elizabeth? We can talk about the wines. The wines alone . . . Besides, the others will be there—Sarah." She looks at him encouragingly.

"And Mother," Henry says.



"I hear they can freeze you until they discover a cure."

HE has booked the private room upstairs at Elizabeth, and it's terribly expensive, but Henry couldn't face cooking on such an occasion. He is a perfectionist about his cooking; he exhausts himself worrying. The room is dark with rich panelling, and there are candles set in antique sconces. When he opens the door, Susan steps in and sees his family for the first time, pale and a little startled in the dim light, blinking to see her, like cave dwellers. Then Ed jumps up and clasps her hand. Sarah is kissing Henry on the cheek. "Hello, dear," Rose says to Susan. "Henry, we thought you would never get here. I was sure it was the wrong restaurant and I was afraid we wouldn't be able to see you."

"Mother," he says, "this is Susan McPhearson."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Rose says to Susan. "Tell me, how do you spell your name?"

When the terrine arrives, Sarah takes the conversation into her own hands. "Where will you be living?" she asks Susan and Henry.

"In Henry's flat," Susan says, "until we find something bigger. I've still got my books up in mine, and—"

"And we've got a cottage in Wantage," Henry tells them. "I'll drive you out there tomorrow afternoon."

"Out in the country?" Rose asks. "I've always wanted a sweet cottage in the country," she tells Susan, "ever since I was a little girl; a thatched cottage with roses. I grew up in London, you know. I was evacuated. . . ."

"Really?" Susan exclaims, but they are interrupted.

"Ma," Ed says, leaning over, "they don't have any plain chicken."

"You know I can't have sauces," Rose says. "Not with my digestion."

"It doesn't come without sauce," Henry says.

"In the beginning it all comes without sauce," Rose replies.

"Have a little fish," Sarah suggests.

"Where is your family, dear?" Rose asks Susan.

"My sisters are coming up Saturday for the wedding. Dad is here now, but he doesn't go out at night."

"Hmm," Rose says. "And who is performing the ceremony?"

"The Junior Chaplain at the College. We got him because I'm staff."

Ed leans back in his chair. "So you get him free?" he asks lightly.

"You're having a priest?" Rose asks.

"A very liberal one," Susan says. "Very young. Vegan."

"You told me a justice of the peace," Rose tells Henry. "I thought you said a justice of the peace."

"We were considering it," Henry says.

"That was when we were going to have a simpler wedding," explains Susan.

"But no one told me about this—"

"Ma, we discussed this in Washington!" Ed exclaims. "We discussed this at the airport. I told you ten times about this wedding."

The door opens, and the waiter backs in with a tray of covered platters. In silence he serves the family. Sarah smiles wanly at him. When he comes to Rose she holds up her hand and says, "None for me, thank you."

"None at all, Madam?" the waiter asks.

"Mother," Henry whispers. The waiter looks at him for direction. Henry gestures him to put the plate down on the table. Rose waves him away.

"Look, put it there on the sideboard," Sarah says. They all watch as the waiter covers it up and rushes about getting a stand for the dish, lighting the flame under it.

"Ed, I want to go home," Rose says after the waiter has gone.

"We're going to stay here and finish dinner," Ed tells her doggedly, and he begins to eat.

"Ed," Rose says, "call me a cab. I want to go back to Heathrow."

Sarah gulps down her wine the wrong way and starts to choke. Susan thumps her on the back.

"No, we're not doing that now," Ed is telling Rose. "We can't change the tickets, you're not going, and that's just

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it. I've had enough, Ma. We've come this far and we're going through with this thing."

"Ed!" Sarah coughs.

"This wedding," Ed amends.

Rose begins to cry. "What would your dear father say to this?" she asks. "Did I bring you up to give you away to a priest? Just tell me, Henry, what change has occurred in you to bring you to this?"

Henry looks across the table to the antique sideboard with Rose's covered dinner on it. What change indeed? It was an escape he'd planned his whole life, ever since he'd learned to read, when he uncovered Arabian caverns and climbed Scottish citadels and read Keats' odes in the bathroom. He was scribing the Romantic poets into memory as he walked to school, big for his age—he was always tall, while Ed was little and mean and played basketball, all speed and elbows. Henry has told Susan about this. How he wore lace-up shoes and carried a leather briefcase stained burnt-orange from the snow, the buckles working themselves loose. It was stuffed with Norse myths, crammed with Arthurian romances—and, of course, his science books, his Hebrew books. He has told Susan how he and Ed schlepped to Hebrew school after regular school and every week he sat in Mr. Hurov's class and watched Mr. Hurov with his pointy teeth announce: "*Hayom nilmad binyan kal.*" "Today we will learn conjugation *kal.*" The first conjugation. The easy one. Every week and every year. The class moved up and up, into Intermediate and even Advanced Hebrew, and they never learned the other conjugations. There were girls sitting in back who made sure of that. Slender, cracking gum with little pointed tongues, like pubescent ladies of Avignon. They never listened, never let the class move on. And how Mr. Hurov sighed, how he fumed. He was a very cultured European man, and he wanted them to learn enough to read a certain poem by Bialik about a pool in the forest. The girls didn't even know about the pool. They weren't even listening when Mr. Hurov told the class about it. Henry knew about the poem, the pool in the forest, but of course he couldn't read it. He didn't know the other six conjugations. He didn't have the vocabulary. He told Susan how they made him practice for his bar mitzvah and he had to memorize the Hebrew and pretend he understood it. How he took comfort in writing his bar-mitzvah speech. His portion was the attempted sacrifice of Isaac, and he spent weeks reading about human sacrifice. He read W. Robertson Smith's book "Lectures on the Religion of the Semites" and typed up his speech on the ancient sacrificial cults, laboriously typed it—thirty-one pages—on his father's manual typewriter. And then the Rabbi met with him to review his speech, read two pages and put it down on his desk and said—this was what crushed him—"Where do you thank your family and friends for coming? Your aunts from Philadelphia? Why didn't you thank Mr. Hurov for preparing you and teaching you Hebrew?"

"Because he *didn't* teach me any Hebrew," Henry had muttered. But of course they made him do it their way. He told Susan how he sat smothered in the long, stifling service at the temple, where the cantor sang out of the right side of his mouth and the congregation droned in answer. How he rose and recited the name of each relative who had come to witness this milestone. How, naturally, all his research on human sacrifice was excised from the speech. In summer he had hay fever and sneezed in the dusty, airless rooms of the house, with its polished tables and tall, fringed, shantung lampshades, its twin beds with pale-blue candlewick bedspreads, its overstuffed chairs, heavy curtains, heavy meals. Rose took him and Ed shopping and tried to force Henry to buy jackets and shoes that never quite fit. In the shoe store he would stand on the fluoroscope and stare at the X-ray image of his feet. The green outline of his bones. Books and the museums beckoned to the other world.

He hadn't thought of it in years, when he met Susan. It was years since he'd left home, years since he'd bothered to remember it all—his childhood or even his first plans to escape the city and the department stores, the Temple, the gum-cracking girls. Talking to Susan he remembered his first sightings of the Old World, completely new to him. He told her how he found it in Mr. Birnbaum's German and French classes at Tilden High School and how he started to read Flaubert and trail his fingers in streams of adjectives. How he discovered the Pre-Raphaelites and saw a reproduction of Millais's "Ophelia," the figure floating downstream,

"Put that away. Your money's no good here."

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her hair floating with the flowers, and how he wanted that painting, or rather wanted to drift downstream himself into that painting, to submerge himself in those colors, surrender to that shining water. Meanwhile, Ed was taking Spanish in Mr. Levinson's class so that he could become an ambassador to South America and then an official in the State Department. Henry hadn't thought of this in years, and perhaps that was why, when Henry began talking to Susan, he fell in love so quickly. They sat down together at Les Quatre Saisons, and he found himself telling her about Mr. Hurov and the shoe stores, the corridors of Tilden High School, his aborted bar-mitzvah speech. All of it tumbled out; she nodded sagely, without the slightest comprehension. That moved him deeply, to see her fascination with his childhood, the endless rituals he remembered, the embarrassments, the aesthetic violations—the maroon-flocked wallpaper in the Temple's basement Social Hall, the mirrors, and the modern brass chandelier spreading across the ceiling like an arthritic hand, palm up. His cloying aunts. She had never heard of such things. He unburdened his heart there in the restaurant until the last crumbs of their strawberry tarts had vanished and she sat looking into his eyes, mesmerized. Dare he make the comparison? He felt like Othello, come from foreign parts. He could never say it—it would sound ridiculous—but it was true: "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, and I lov'd her that she did pity them." There were aspects of his past they didn't discuss, but, then, those things belonged to a part of his life which he had rarely if ever spoken about, even within himself—a part of his life that had narrowed over time, hemmed in by a lack of direct speech. With Susan it was all talk. He poured words into her ear, filled her open hands with his stories. The other kind of passion was not something he and Susan associated strongly with each other. This is not to say they never touched each other; only that it was talk the two of them loved best, and that Henry had wanted a listener, thirsted for one. From the time of this first dinner he was overwhelmed with gratitude, tenderness, relief. He had told her his whole childhood, down to the last bourgeois pretension, told her everything.

"Has anyone mentioned to you that I ride a Harley to work?"

• •

"I'm going to no wedding with priests in it," Rose is telling Ed, and her voice startles Henry, returning him to the dinner at hand.

"Mother," Henry says, "please don't upset yourself."

"She's tired," Ed advises Henry softly. "None of us got any sleep on the plane. She said she was taking a nap this afternoon, but—"

"Why are you whispering about me in the third person?" Rose asks. "I can tell you what I was doing this afternoon. I was writing seven postcards. I'm not tired," she informs Ed. "I'm upset, because I was told one thing and then another, and I don't like to be manipulated. If it was going to be a priest you should have told me the truth."

"Here," Sarah says to Rose, "try to eat some of your chicken; it costs a fortune." She puts Rose's dish on the table and pulls off the cover with a flourish.

"I don't want it," Rose says. "I want to go home."

"Absolutely not," Ed says, mortified for Henry, who has provided such an exquisite dinner, such delicate wines.

"I'll run you back," Susan offers, to Ed's surprise. "Why don't I drive her back to the hotel? It's just ten minutes." She takes out her car keys.

It's almost dark as Susan drives Rose back to the Old Parsonage. "You must understand," Rose declares, "I love everything English. My family sent me to London when the Great War started. When the English Jewish societies provided the opportunity, my parents sent me. I was just ten years old, but there was no food in Vienna. It was hardly better than Bukovina. When my English family took me in I was so weak and frail they had to carry me. But after the first month I blossomed out! We took tea, we had the theatre, and at the seaside we played with our governess, who had an operatic voice and used to sing on the balcony—" She pauses, searching her memory. "In any case, he gets it from me," she says.

"Gets what?" asks Susan.

"England. He loves England, and it's because of me. I brought him up that way. I bought him books when he was a little child. King Arthur and the English poetry. Ed was never interested in England, but I would tell Henry about the countryside. The green meadows and fields of poppies. I learned all my English here in England, you know, when I was a child. My English family provided me with an education and even a tutor in Hebrew twice a week. They didn't forget

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that. They were a very wealthy family and they took us every year to a cottage by the sea, and our governess used to go out on the balcony and sing like a golden flute. That was how she would sing—" She loses the thought when the man at the hotel opens the door and helps her out of the car.

After Susan leaves, and Rose is alone in her hotel room, she takes two Percodans and lies down. Then she remembers what she was about to say.

THE day before the wedding, Susan takes off from work, and Henry finally has a chance to drive his family out to Wantage to see the cottage. They have to coax Rose out of the hotel, and she tells them all again that she won't be coming to the wedding. She would rather sit in the hotel dining room alone. But when she sees Henry's cottage she sighs. It has a gray, thatched roof and white walls. "The garden is still rough, but we're planting," Henry says. "Doesn't it look just like David Copperfield's Rookery? It doesn't have rooks, of course." The thatch is covered with chicken wire to keep the birds away.

Susan unlocks the door, and they all stand in the little front room and look at the gleaming pewter pitchers on the mantel and Henry's china cabinet, his Persian carpets. "Oh, it's a doll's house," Rose murmurs, and she sinks down on the love seat, ready to stay.

"I almost sold it," Susan says. "It was such trouble. I had it listed before I met Henry."

"How *did* you meet?" Ed asks.

"Oh, didn't Henry say? Dick Frankel introduced us at the Wantage Center. He thought Henry might buy the house."

Ed looks over at Henry and imagines the meeting at one of the Center teas. Dick Frankel bustling around as Center founder, fund-raiser—proprietor of the manor house he has acquired for his Center for Middle East Peace. A fixer-up manor house on the outer fringes of academic Oxford. Henry's cottage, Ed thinks unkindly, is a similar project on a smaller scale. Yes, Frankel would have introduced Henry and Susan at one of his garden parties. Long tables in the sunken garden at the back of the manor house. Israeli historians in short-sleeved white shirts, Henry in a lemon-yellow linen jacket and silk tie, a babble of Hebrew and the slight stammer of Oxford English under the trees, and Susan standing in the middle in a great straw hat and a billowy skirt—not at all impressionistic, quite substantial.

Henry is ushering Sarah upstairs to show her the bedroom. "Watch your head," he says as they sit down in a pair of chairs tucked under the eaves. "I wanted to talk to you about Mother," he whispers. "Do you really think she'll refuse to come to the chapel tomorrow?"

"I'm not sure," Sarah begins.

"Do you think she'd do that to me?" Henry asks.

"You know her better than I do," Sarah says. "She's capable of just about anything."

"But you've got to talk to her."

Sarah smiles wryly at her brother-in-law. "Look, we're going to try, but you can't let her ruin the wedding. You knew she'd make a scene. She's been practicing for months."

"Years," says Henry.

"No, not years. The truth is, she's in shock. She wasn't expecting it. Well, none of us— So tell, me, anyway." Sarah leans closer. "How did it all happen? When did you decide—uh, propose?"

Henry brightens a little. "Well, I was in the market, looking for a little cottage just like this, and after Dick gave me Susan's number we drove out here one Sunday and I saw this place—a wreck—and I said, 'Absolutely not,' and she said, 'How would you like to come round for a slummy lunch?' And we went up to her flat and talked books, and we talked about decorating. She was reupholstering and so was I, and we talked about the cottage, and I said she should redo it and then sell it. She could get estimates. And I took her to the store and showed her our new fabrics. She started buying, and we went in on it together."

"Quite a project," says Sarah.

"Oh, yes, an investment. We were going to sell it to a couple from London as a retreat. But we were both such perfectionists; we were spending weeks

SIMONE WEIL: THE YEAR OF FACTORY WORK (1934-35)

A glass of red wine trembles on the table,
Untouched, and lamplight falls across her shoulders.

She looks down at the cabbage on her plate,
She stares at the broken bread. Proposition:

The irreducible slavery of workers. "To work
In order to eat, to eat in order to work."

She thinks of the punch clock in her chest,
Of night deepening in the bindweed and crabgrass,

In the vapors and atoms, in the factory
Where a steel vise presses against her temples

Ten hours per day. She doesn't eat.
She doesn't sleep. She almost doesn't think

Now that she has brushed against the bruised
Arm of oblivion and tasted the blood, now

That the blast furnace has labelled her skin
And branded her forehead like a Roman slave's.

Surely God comes to the clumsy and inefficient,
To welders in dark spectacles, and unskilled

Workers who spend their allotment of days
Pulling red-hot metal bobbins from the flames.

• •

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Surely God appears to the shattered and anonymous,
To the humiliated and afflicted

Whose legs are married to perpetual motion
And whose hands are too small for their bodies.

Proposition: "Through work man turns himself
Into matter, as Christ does through the Eucharist.

Work is like a death. We have to pass
Through death. We have to be killed."

We have to wake in order to work, to labor
And count, to fail repeatedly, to submit

To the furious rhythm of machines, to suffer
The pandemonium and inhabit the repetitions,

To become the sacrificial beast: time entering
Into the body, the body entering into time.

She presses her forehead against the table:
To work in order to eat, to eat. . .

Outside, the moths are flaring into stars
And stars are strung like beads across the heavens.

Inside, a glass of red wine trembles
Next to the cold cabbage and broken bread.

Exhausted night, she is the brimming liquid
And untouched food. Come down to her.

—Edward Hirsch

• •

looking for period doorknobs; we were restoring a 1923 stove—"

"Henry," Rose calls from downstairs.

"*Aaagh!*" he screams, as, standing up, he slams his head into the sloped ceiling.

"My God, what *is* the matter?" Susan cries out as she races up the stairs.

"No, no, don't, don't touch me," Henry cries, clutching his head, and he stands smarting, face flushed red, in the center of the room. "Don't crowd me," he says.

"Let me have a look at it," Susan says.

"Just get me some ice," he moans, and sinks down on one of the white twin beds.

"I *thought* those chairs were too big for that spot," Susan says when she returns with the ice. "Oh, Henry, that's a nasty bump. What will they think tomorrow? Just take this pillow here and hold the ice."

"Henry," Rose calls from the stairwell, "what did you do to yourself?"

On the drive back to the hotel, Rose dozes off and Ed listens intently to BBC 3. Sarah imagines Henry and Susan spreading out fabric swatches over the furniture in the cottage. She thinks of them putting so much of themselves into the house that they belonged to it and to each other. Marriage was the only way to finish up such a project, such a detailed, intricate design—reproduction William Morris vines twining the kitchen walls. Sleepily, Sarah thinks of those poets and Oxonians who became Higher and Higher Church, seeking spire after spire until they were Catholic and their churches were cathedrals. Was Henry like that, marrying? Moving—she imagines—from young men to gardening, then to orchards, and finally to a cottage and a wife? A courtship more and more ornate. Sarah had thought Henry lived beautifully before; she had been a little disappointed to hear of his marrying. It seemed like a capitulation to the everyday world. But Henry hasn't given in at all. He has retreated from the delicate cynicism of Evelyn Waugh into the more decorated nineteenth century.

WHEN the gong sounds for breakfast at the Old Parsonage, Ed and Sarah dress quickly and march over to Rose's door. "Rose," Sarah calls through the door, "we'll be in the dining room." Then they go down to their porridge and their thin, triangle-cut toast. They don't wait for Rose to answer the door; they have a battle plan.

But Rose doesn't join them at breakfast, and she isn't waiting for them when they return. Ed runs out for the *Guardian.* Sarah lays out her pressed linen suit on the bed and listens for sounds from the next room. Henry expects them at eleven for pictures. They read the *Guardian* in great detail. Henry phones twice.

"I can't take this," Ed bursts out at ten-thirty. He abandons the plan and pounds on Rose's door. "Come out, Ma—you're coming to the wedding!" he shouts.

"I am certainly not," Rose calls back.

"You're going to sit in bed all day? Is that what you came to England for?"

"I did not come to be bulldozed at my age," Rose says.

Ed stamps back into his room. "I thought she wasn't getting any attention for that kind of behavior," Sarah says. She is loading her camera, slotting extra rolls of film into the loops in the strap.

Ed picks up the phone and calls Rose down the hall. "We're leaving now, Ma," he says softly. "You don't want to make Henry miserable, do you?"

"Don't you browbeat me," Rose snaps. "Can't you see—I'm the one who's miserable?"

They wait a little longer, and then they leave for the wedding. After they have left, the man from room service wheels up a cart piled with covered dishes, a morning paper, coffeepot, and a vase with a rosebud. He stops at Rose's door.

LOOKING down the aisle of the chapel, standing in a storm of organ music, Henry watches Susan as she comes forward to join him. She walks serenely and slowly in her heavy gown, matching her steps to those

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"I'd like to send a nice bouquet of fresh catnip to a certain someone who is very special to me."

• •

of her eighty-three-year-old father.

Ed sits nervously in his high-backed pew and scans the faces of Henry's guests. He guesses that they are nearly all Jewish. As Susan helps her father to a seat, Sarah examines her wedding gown, a patterned cotton damask, white on white, with a bell skirt and full sleeves. Susan's hair shines silver in the jewelled chapel light. Ed fidgets and looks out at the Jewish community of Oxford, some twenty Israeli scholars among them, with dark-eyed children piping up in Hebrew and told to sit still, all of them sitting among banks of white lilies. But Sarah feels a particular joy watching Henry in his gray morning coat and Susan all in white. Surely Henry is living out a kind of fairy tale, or at least the sequel to one, marrying the fairy godmother. "Look, there's Dick and Irene Frankel," Ed whispers.

Henry stands transfixed, with Susan at his side. Above them, far above, stand the seven points of the chapel window, and above that, the rose window, floating like a pendant in the dusty light. The chaplain's voice and the green dusk of the place fill his mind. The dark carvings of leaves, the glint of gold, and rich sound. He has seen and heard but never lived the place as he does now. He forgets everything else and does not realize that his mother has actually arrived and is standing at the back of the chapel, putting the cab change into her wallet, snapping her pocketbook shut.

"THE aspic is melting," Henry tells Susan anxiously under the tent on the Wantage Center grounds. They couldn't get the Merton College Fellows' Garden for the reception.

"They'll eat it all, I'm sure," Susan tells him.

"But tell them to get more ice for the buffet," Henry says.

"All right." Susan walks off purposefully. She has on a good pair of low-heeled shoes under her gown.

It's a stifling summer day. The guests drink cases of the chilled champagne. Henry bustles about; he kisses his mother. The string quartet plays on manfully, flushed with heat, and Henry sighs to find the cool shadows, the wood-glen shade of the carved chapel so soon replaced, and even the wedding cake sweating a little in the sun. Susan fans herself cheerfully and sets out a pair of lawn chairs for her father and Rose in the deep shade of an oak tree.

"Oh dear, yes, it is hot," Dick Frankel says, and Ed thinks that Dick hasn't changed at all since the days when Ed was lecturing here at his summer institute, and the kids were roughhousing on this very lawn. "Welcome just the same," Dick tells him. "We must have you again for the West Bank conference next summer." Sarah takes a picture of Ed and Dick standing there, Dick gesturing toward the manor which houses his institute. She gets a nice shot of Susan as well, as Susan whirls around in her bell skirt, pointing with her index finger toward the long, white dessert table.

"I love everything English," Rose tells Susan's father under the tree. "I grew up in London, you know, in an English family, and I did everything an English child can do. We had teas and holidays at the sea—our governess had an operatic voice, in fact, and she used to sing on the balcony by the sea. Passersby used to stop and listen. They were very kind to me—my English father particularly. But," she concludes, "my real family was in New York—I was sent to England before they had the opportunity to emigrate, and my visa was delayed. All that time in England I was waiting to leave, you see. I only wanted to go home to my real family. Only, only wanted to go home."

"It's time," Susan says under the tent. "It's got to be done." She takes the knife and plunges it deep into the center tier of the cake.

"Oh, God," Henry says, "I don't think that's the right place. Look, you hit the support. Get the caterer—"

Henry turns away when the caterers dismantle the wedding cake. "It would be rather silly to spend all that money and not eat it, wouldn't it, darling?" Susan asks. "We've got the pictures, in any case."

Henry carries Rose's piece out for her himself, along with some strawberries. "Thank you, dear," she says.

"Thank you for coming," he tells her, and his voice shakes.

"It was very nice," Rose replies. "This gentleman here is asleep, however."

"I'll get Susan." Henry strides off in his sweltering morning coat.

"I never wanted to *stay* in England," Rose muses as she sets to her cake and strawberries.

—ALLEGRA GOODMAN

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

A NATION OF CONTRADICTIONS

A POLITICAL scientist who visits Singapore would regard the island nation as fascinating, since its authoritarian government functions in many ways like that of a Communist state yet is dedicated wholeheartedly to the pursuit of capitalism. An economist would consider Singapore instructive, because there is no better example of a country that has gone from poverty to riches through good economic management. A sociologist looking at rules and regulations would call Singapore unique in the world. But more casual visitors might characterize Singapore differently, often by using the word "dull." Friends in the United States who had been to Singapore used this word and looked at me sympathetically when I told them that I was going there for a month. The taxi-driver taking me from the airport to my hotel also used it, and added that "no tourist should spend more than two days in Singapore—one day shopping and the other sightseeing." When I met the Prime Minister's press secretary, he smiled in an embarrassed way and said, "You must find Singapore dull."

That Singapore can be so interesting beneath the surface and at the same time appear to be so dull is just one of its many paradoxes. Approximately two hundred and forty square miles, with two million seven hundred thousand residents, Singapore has bulldozed almost all its past, tearing down colorful ethnic neighborhoods and replacing them with office towers and high-rise apartment blocks that go on mile after mile—an endless horizon of uniform drabness. The tourist district bisected by Orchard Road, one of Singapore's main streets, offers another numbing sort of repetition: multistory indoor shopping malls filled with stylish boutiques, malls by the dozen and boutiques by the thousand, evoking the image of a prosperous American suburb that has run amok. The weather is certainly dull: the average temperature varies by only one degree centigrade from the hottest to the coldest months, and the oppressive humidity never lets up. Then, there are the Singaporeans themselves. People stand in interminable lines waiting for a taxi instead of going out on the street to hail one, because the latter act is frowned upon by the authorities. Joggers routinely stop at "DON'T WALK" signs—even on Sunday mornings, when there isn't a car in sight. The government tells Singaporeans what books and magazines they can read, what movies they can see, and what television programs they can watch, and the result is a cultural desert in a nation so wealthy that it could easily be a showcase for the arts. Residents of Singapore pursue but one activity with passion—a passion so great that it sometimes seems to constitute recreation as well as vocation. This is the making of money.

Lee Kuan Yew, who since Singapore gained its independence from Britain, in 1959, has presided over the nation in much the way a strict father might rear what he feels are errant children, dismisses with contempt the notion that a dull, soulless city has replaced the excitement of the teeming ethnic communities that populated the island three decades ago. Singapore is more than seventy-five per cent Chinese, fourteen per cent Malay, and seven per cent Indian. Lee, whose shrewd and pragmatic style of governing leaves no room for romanticizing the past, once noted that "there was no sanitation and no running water, hot or cold, for many not even electricity," and asked, "And what was there to do? The people could grow tapioca, make children, and drink." He had a point. Anyone who disparages Singapore for being dull and authoritarian has overlooked an entirely different side—one of remarkable accomplishments. Although it began as an impoverished nation with no resources, it has managed to solve the major problems that plague almost every other large urban area in the world today—problems that threaten to balloon into crisis proportions in the United States. Singapore has virtually no poverty, no homelessness, and no begging, and little crime. Unemployment is close to nonexistent. The air is clean. Cars are so strictly regulated that traffic flows freely even during rush hours. The prosperity of Singapore, where people lead

"Actually, Lou, I think it was more than just my being in the right place at the right time. I think it was my being the right race, the right religion, the right sex, the right socioeconomic group, having the right accent, the right clothes, going to the right schools . . ."

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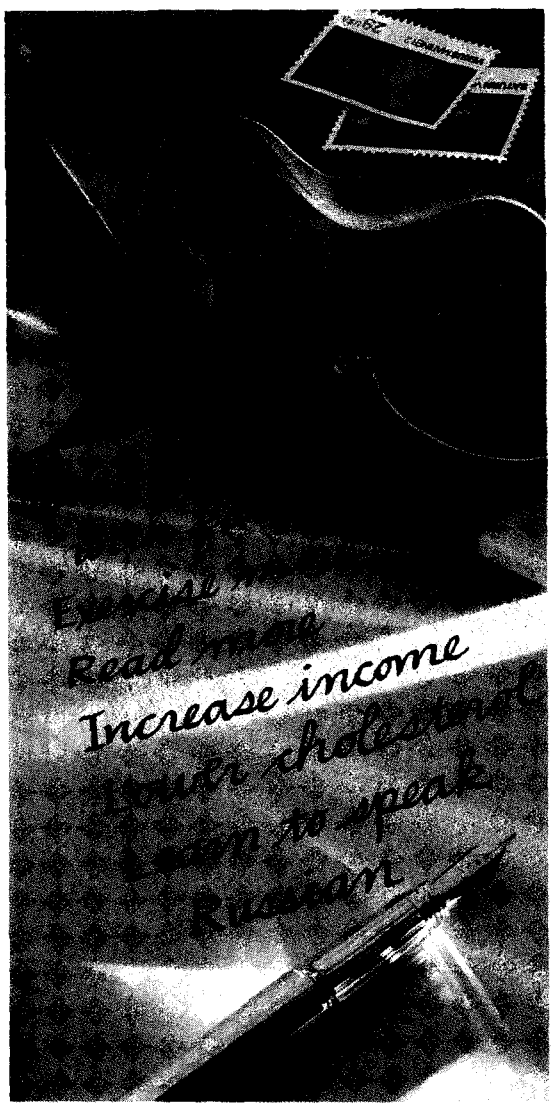

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lives that even many Japanese would envy, is shared widely. The same cabdriver who called Singapore dull admitted after a bit of questioning that he grew up in the nineteen-fifties in a one-room "shophouse," where a seven-member family both worked and lived. His parents slept on the bed; he slept under it. Today, he lives, with his wife and two children, in a three-bedroom apartment, which they own.

From economics to food, Singapore is a nation of contradictions. Except for Japan, it has the best-educated, most knowledgeable, and most worldly-wise society in Asia, but the government still tries in many ways to regulate its citizens' lives. Although Singapore has no enemies—Communism no longer poses a threat, and the island's relations with its immediate neighbors, Malaysia and Indonesia, are vastly improved—it continues to maintain one of the largest armies in the world proportionate to population, and has a ruthlessly efficient and intrusive intelligence agency, the Internal Security Department, or I.S.D., that is tireless in its pursuit of dissent. Despite the fact that Singapore is a bastion of capitalism, the government owns many of the largest local companies and frequently interferes with economic decisions. The government is so prudish that it bans *Cosmopolitan* as well as *Playboy*, yet the national airline promotes itself with slogans on the order of "Singapore Girl you're a great way to fly." And although Singapore has a great many "hawker centers," each with an ethnic mélange of food stalls, that offer some of the best street food in the world, young Singaporeans flock to American fast-food restaurants, including no fewer than thirty-four McDonald's.

For any Westerner accustomed to Asian cities choked by pollution, traffic jams, and snarled communications, Singapore is an oasis. The airport is so efficient, the taxis are so numerous, and the roads are so good that a visitor arriving at Changi Airport, on the eastern tip of the island, twelve miles from downtown, can reach his hotel room there thirty minutes after stepping off the plane. That visitor can drink water from the tap; get business cards, eyeglasses, or a tailor-made suit the day after placing an order; and ride a modern subway system whose underground stations as well as its trains are air-conditioned. An international phone call can be direct-dialled as quickly in Singapore as in the United States. All business can be conducted in English, because it is the language that all the schools use. (Only one out of five Singaporeans speaks English at home, though.) While the dreary high-rise buildings convey no atmosphere, Singapore has retained enough greenery to make it a pleasant city for walking. Every block has trees and flowers; the island's entire east coast, facing the South China Sea, is a string of parks and beaches, and only half an hour from downtown are a nature preserve and some semi-rural areas with farms. No litter mars a walk through Singapore's streets, because a litterbug must pay a fine of up to six hundred and twenty dollars and undergo counselling. (Cigarette butts count as litter, and many of Singapore's litter baskets—there are forty-five thousand of them—are equipped with ashtrays.) Everything in Singapore is clean; everything in Singapore works.

In a nation known for efficiency, the government is most efficient of all. In other parts of Asia, government services can take an eternity to arrive and then come bound in red tape, the instrument for cutting away the tape being a bribe. But in Singapore when someone calls to report a pothole the Public Works Department fills it within forty-eight hours. The Telecommunication Authority will install a new phone the day after the order is received. Secretaries are so conscientious that a journalist gets unsolicited wake-up calls to make sure he'll be on time for early-morning interviews with their bosses. A bribe, whether a little tip to an employee or a large payoff to a high-ranking minister, represents a ticket to jail. A postman was once arrested for accepting a gift of one Singapore dollar, equal to sixty-two American cents. A civil servant who receives a present in the mail must send it to a government agency, which puts a price tag on it and then offers to sell it back to the recipient. If the employee doesn't want to buy it, the gift is sold at an auction. Such is the shame attached to corruption that in 1986, when the Minister of National Development was accused of accepting a bribe to save private land from government acquisition, he committed suicide.

The government of Singapore, ever fearful of snakes in its capitalist Garden of Eden, loves to make rules. The walls of buildings are plastered with rules, telling people what they can't do and how much they have to pay if they dare to try it. The fines represent considerably more than a slap on the wrist, and they're enforced often enough to make most potential miscreants think twice. Eating or drinking on the subway costs the equivalent of three hundred and ten American dollars, driving without a seat belt a hundred and twenty-four dollars, smoking in a restaurant three hundred and ten dollars, and jaywalking, a relative bargain, thirty dollars. Few proscribed activities are left to the imagination, as opposed to being posted; for example, in the Botanical Gardens, where "PROHIBITED" signs threaten to outnumber plant-identification markers, a pictograph warns against shooting at birds with slingshots. Nor do violations always depend for discovery on a passing policeman. Trucks and commercial vans are required to install a yellow roof light that flashes when the vehicle exceeds the speed limit. When a taxi exceeds the maximum speed on freeways of forty-eight miles an hour, loud chimes go off inside; the chimes are so annoying that the driver is likely to slow down. At some intersections, cameras photograph the license plates of cars that pass through as the light is changing to red; the drivers receive bills for that offense in the mail.

The rules are frequently backed up by publicity campaigns, using advertising slogans, displays at public events, and articles in the leading newspaper, the *Straits Times*, which in all areas enthusiastically fills the role of government lapdog. There have been campaigns to be punctual, to say "please" and "thank you," and to buy frozen pork

Busted

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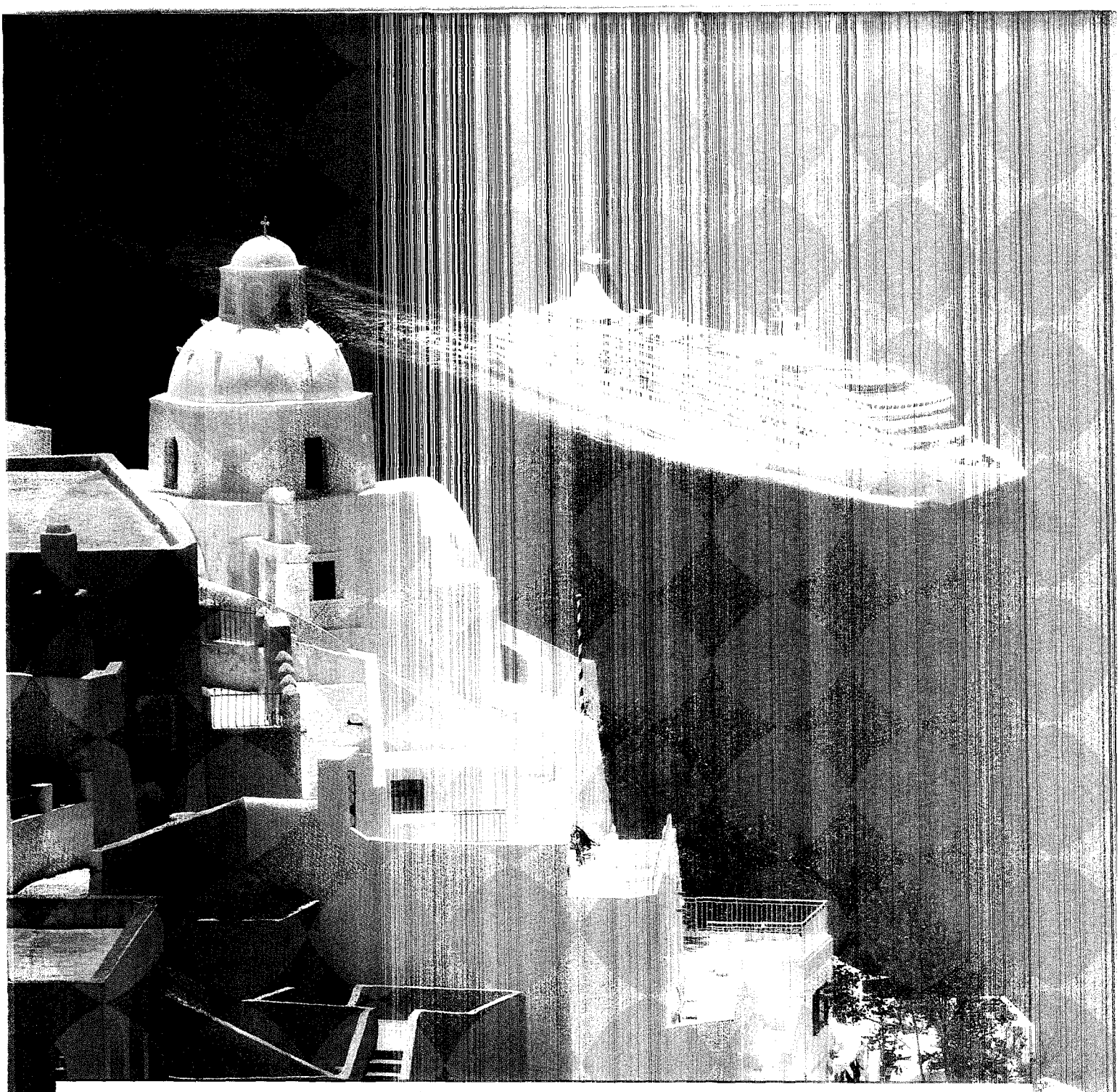

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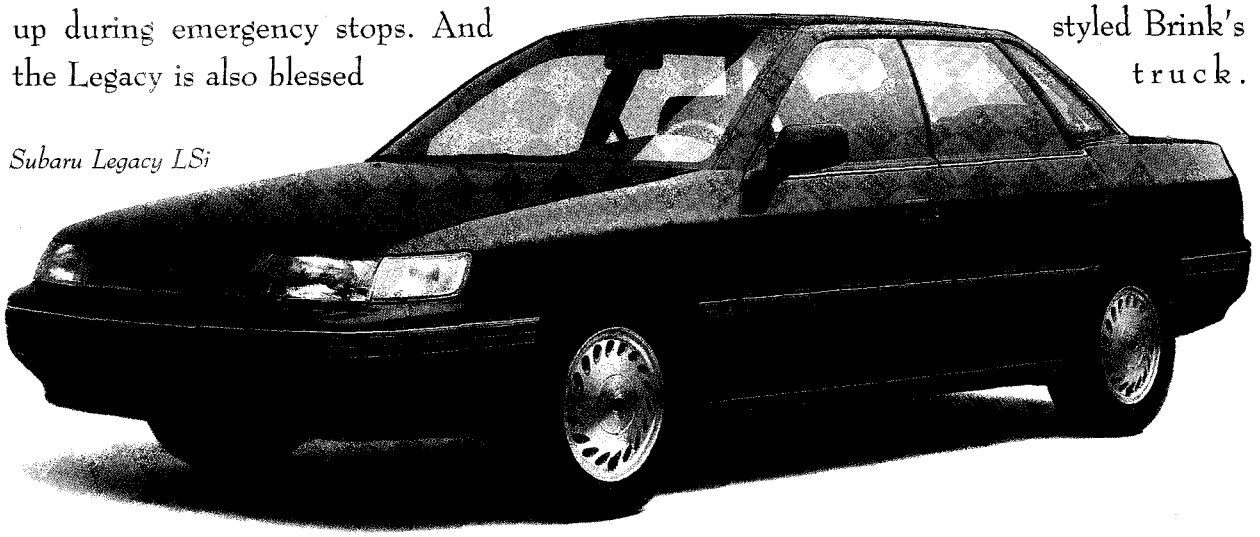

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[1] Based on R.L. Polk & Co., registration statistics. [2] May, 1990. For additional information, 1-800-284-8584. © Subaru of America, 1991.

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rather than fresh pork, which, the *Straits Times* said in 1985, "can be dangerous because it can mean living at the mercy of other countries." The government once even urged Singaporeans to "have spontaneous fun." In 1984, Singapore initiated an anti-spitting campaign, with the distribution of pamphlets, messages on radio and television, mobile exhibitions at food centers and markets, twenty thousand posters on buses and taxis, and, for children, comic strips and a coloring contest. "DON'T SPIT IN PUBLIC—AFTER THE CAMPAIGN, CULPRITS WILL BE FINED," a large headline in the *Straits Times* warned, and it also printed dozens of articles, editorials, columns, and letters on the subject. The newspaper didn't confine its warnings to committing the crime in public places. In one article, it quoted a tailor as promising "that he would now spit in drains," and went on, "But experts say that wherever it is done, spitting is unhygienic. It spreads a lot of germs that cause illnesses like tuberculosis, cough and cold, influenza, sore throat, measles, mumps, and chicken pox."

Clean public toilets at shopping malls, food centers, and other public places are among the amenities that make Singapore perhaps the most livable city in Asia. But the campaign that brought them into being, which started in 1988, might be viewed as excessive. A law requiring the flushing of toilets and urinals was enacted, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported at the time, "to punish those of its population who have not been properly housetrained." The magazine explained, "Those who ignore the new law do so on peril of a fine of up to S$1000. And how is this law being enforced? A crack battalion of inspectors from Singapore's Ministry of Environment will be roving public toilets in pursuit of the aberrant non-flushers. This could prove embarrassing for the respectable patrons of such public facilities. How to distinguish the man from the ministry from the common-or-garden Peeping Tom?" When I visited the *Straits Times* library, I requested its file of articles on public toilets, and received a folder four inches thick. It included articles day after day, complete with graphic pictures, stemming from calls to "the *Straits Times* Toilets of Shame hotline." In June of 1989, the newspaper ran a photograph of a sheepish-looking man staring at the floor as he walked away from a row of shiny-clean urinals. The caption read "Caught without a flush: Mr. Amar Mohamed leaving the Lucky Plaza toilet without flushing the urinal."

Today, Singapore is a city with almost no poverty. Hong Kong may have grown as rapidly, but in Hong Kong the gap between rich and poor is visible everywhere. By contrast, I never saw anyone in Singapore shabbily dressed, and everyone appeared to have at least a passable place to live. Food is cheap and plentiful. Even low-income Singaporeans have access to high-quality medical care; doctors at public hospitals in the United States might look enviously at the public wards of Singapore General Hospital.

But Singapore was not always so prosperous or so tidy. When Lee Kuan Yew took power, he found himself governing a mosquito-infested swamp dotted with pig and chicken farms, fishing villages, and squatter colonies of tin-roofed shacks. The streets of the central city were lined with shophouses—mostly two-story buildings with ornate façades. A family would operate a business on the ground floor and live on the second floor. Often without plumbing and electricity, and housing as many as ten people to a room, the shophouses may have presented a picturesque sight for tourists, but they were far less agreeable for their occupants. "The Chinese, who constitute the main current of the city, live in utter filth and poverty," *Asia Scene*, a travel magazine, reported in 1960. "Their poverty is phenomenal. One must see with his own eyes to believe it." Compounding the problem of poverty were racial and political tensions, coming both from the Malay minority and from young Chinese infused with the ideals of the Maoist revolution; these tensions frequently spilled out into the streets.

In not much more than a decade, Singaporeans were passing from poverty to affluence, and the nation's economy from a basket case to the powerhouse of southern Asia. The explanation for this transformation, as for nearly everything else that happens in Singapore, rests with Lee Kuan Yew. Lee has put his stamp on Singapore to an extent that few political leaders anywhere in the world have ever matched. Tough and authoritarian although operating under a pretense of democracy, uninterested in personal wealth among a people who devote their lives to financial gain, often rude and contemptuous in a country that runs annual campaigns promoting the virtues of courtesy, Lee embodies as many contradictions as does Singapore itself. "Lee is also the most interesting statesman in Asia," Robert Elegant, a longtime Asia correspondent, has written. "Among those who lead fights for independence, only Lee Kuan Yew afterward ruled wisely. . . . Others failed the transition from revolutionary to ruler: Mao Tse-tung in China, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Ho Chi Minh in Viet Nam, and Sukarno in Indonesia. Those great men left disorder—economic, political, and administrative—compounded by corruption."

Singapore has what its economists call a proactive rather than a reactive economy. There are no such occurrences as brownouts or clogged telephone circuits, because everything is well planned. In 1982, although the terminal at Changi Airport showed no sign of approaching capacity, planning began on a second terminal, which opened in late 1990. And although this sprawling new terminal now looks almost empty, planners are already working on Terminal No. 3, which will open early in the next century.

In much the same manner, the sixty-eight-year-old Lee began planning for his succession more than a decade ago. In November of 1990, he stepped down as Prime Minister, the position he had held for three decades, and assumed the post of senior minister, yielding the Prime Ministership to Goh Chok Tong, who was then forty-nine, and who had been a deputy prime minister. While Lee is still the head of the People's Action Party, the political party that dominates Singapore, and while it's clear that Goh would never make a major move that Lee opposed, the notion of an authoritarian ruler in perfect health and without serious opposition giving up a share of power is hardly commonplace in Asia. "Despite Lee's British training, despite his Queen's English and his highly modern view of economics, as a politician Lee is a traditional Chinese despot," a high-ranking Western diplomat in Singapore explained to me. "I'm say-

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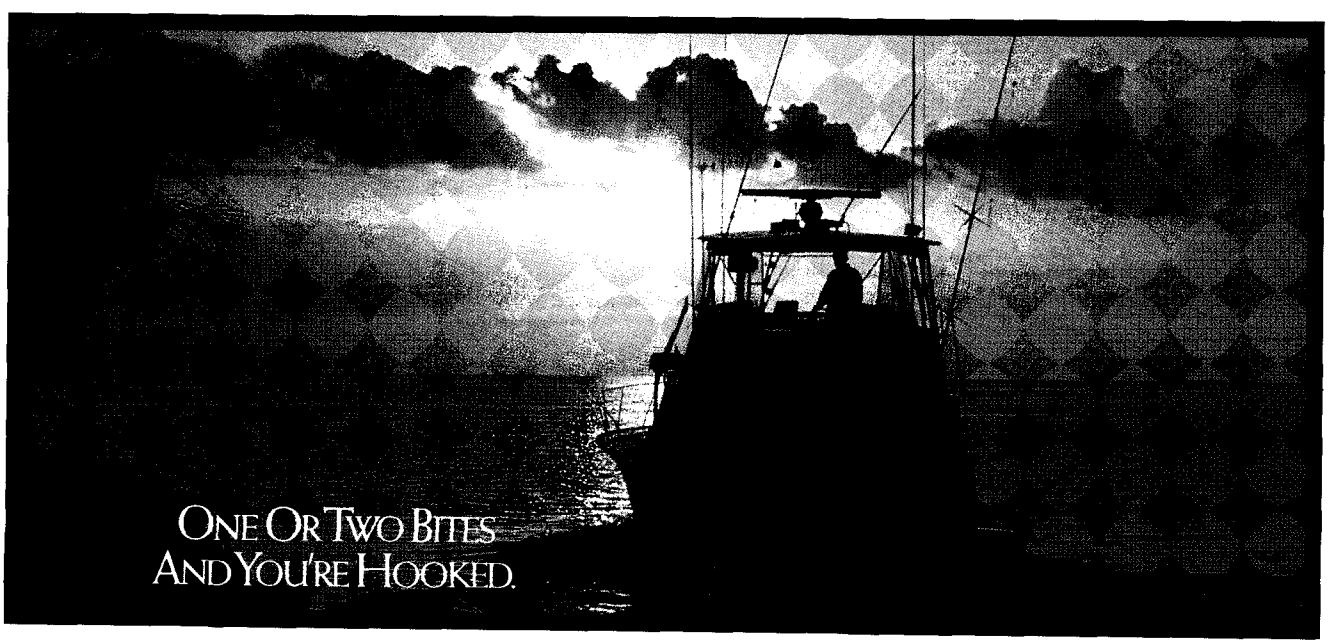
ing this in the positive sense: he ranks with the greatest Chinese emperors. But what distinguishes him from Chinese despots and Deng Xiaoping is that he wants to see his legacy survive him. He saw the need, and he saw that stepping down would be in the country's interest." Lee, who seeks control and order above all else, offered his own explanation last spring. "Multinational corporations and banks expect things to work properly," he said. "That is only possible with continuity. So my colleagues and I phased ourselves out in a graduated, controlled way to avoid any lurching. . . . I hope the transition will pass imperceptibly. If you can feel a lurch, that's contrary to my intentions."

Singapore is sometimes dubbed Singapore, Inc., because its style of government is so much like that of a corporation, but few corporations have chief executive officers as remote from the center of activity as Lee and Goh. The two men work together at Istana (*istana* is the Malay word for "palace"), a handsome old colonial building set in the middle of a large park at the foot of the Orchard Road tourist district. Lee occupies the second floor and Goh the third floor, but their press secretaries and their ministers are miles away, in skyscraper government-office buildings. Only their secretaries work with them. This isolation lends Istana an atmosphere that is almost spooky. Where the building's main entrance used to be, there is now only an elevator, opening directly onto a circular driveway. Guards take a visitor up in the elevator to the second floor and then down a long corridor to the waiting room outside Lee's office. There is no activity along that corridor. Doors open into empty rooms, one of them piled high with cardboard cartons. No one walks down the halls or through the waiting room except the guards, young Chinese who look nervous and uncomfortable.

Lee's style of government is a direct reflection of his personality, and is shaped little by the sort of protocol that might be expected from a national leader. A blunt man with no interest in small talk, he can cast aside diplomatic niceties and make outrageously provocative statements. Recently, for instance, he said that many Asians did not want Japan to become involved in armed peacekeeping activities because allowing it to do so could be like "giving liqueur chocolates to an alcoholic." He has scant interest in the usual trappings of power: he still lives in a modest house that he bought in the nineteen-fifties; he takes Singapore Airlines scheduled flights when he goes on state visits; and he has decreed that there be no pictures of him on the walls of government offices. Lee dislikes putting on a suit and tie. When I interviewed him, he was wearing gray slacks, an open-necked white shirt, and a light-tan jacket zipped up against the air-conditioning; at a second interview, three weeks later, he was wearing what appeared to be exactly the same clothes. He has little interest in food, concerts, or movies, and although he reads avidly, his reading is confined to those works of history, political science, and other areas which can give him ideas for improving Singapore. His one diversion is exercise—a quick sequence of jogging, swimming, cycling, and rowing for half an hour each evening. With sparse steel-gray hair, a craggy face deeply lined under



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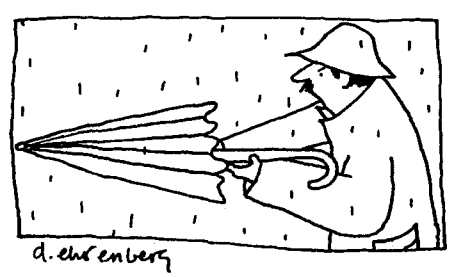
his eyes, and an intense gaze that instantly reflects any feeling of annoyance, Lee is a formidable presence.

The quickness and acuity of Lee's mind are impressive to witness. "He can wipe the floor with most of his opponents," as one European diplomat put it. Robert Orr, the American Ambassador to Singapore, told me, "I've never met anyone who thinks further ahead into the future. In conversations and action, he's always likely to be a step or two ahead of other people." That was certainly true when I interviewed Lee, because several times, as I started to ask a long question, he interrupted after only a few words, and he never failed to deduce just what I was going to say. Nor, in almost three hours of discussions, did he ever evade a question; instead, he gave answers so powerful that I began to wonder whether he could persuade me that a white wall was actually painted black. Lee appears to prepare for an interview the way a prizefighter might for a boxing match, by learning all about his opponent. I first had to submit a résumé to his press secretary specifying my education and the articles I had written. Then Lee got hold of one article, twenty thousand words long, and read it so thoroughly that when he discussed it with me he could recite entire paragraphs. The article was on Laos, and, as with everything else he reads, Lee immediately thought about how he could use it for Singapore's benefit. At the beginning of the first interview, he delivered a monologue on ways that Singapore could start trading with Laos, and what difficulties each route would entail. Then his face brightened. "I know," he said. "I'll send my entrepreneurs to Laos and let them find out."

IN 1950, Lee Kuan Yew returned to Singapore, his birthplace, after four years of study in England, bringing with him a law degree with highest honors from Cambridge. Known then as Harry Lee, he spoke impeccable English but not a word of Mandarin; he could write his name in Chinese characters, but nothing else. His father, an oil-depot superintendent, had wanted Lee "to be the equal of any Englishman." Lee succeeded so brilliantly that George Brown, the British Foreign Secretary in the mid-sixties, said to him then, "Harry, you're the best bloody Englishman east of Suez."

But Lee immediately cast his lot with the radical Chinese in Singapore, who were agitating for independence from Britain. He shared with them only youth; most had been educated in Mandarin at Chinese schools in Singapore, and many were imbued with the ideals of the Communist revolution that had swept China. "At that time, China was the future," Goh Chok Tong told me. "Almost everyone believed that." Lee became a lawyer for labor unions, working side by side with Communists toward the goal of expelling the British. In 1954, Robert Elegant, who was then living in Singapore, first met Lee, and later wrote about what he had witnessed: "Early in 1954, Harry Lee let it be known that he wanted to be called Kuan Yew. He reverted to his Chinese name to make his anticolonial position unmistakable. He also began to study Mandarin, pasting lists of ideograms to his shaving mirror. He appeared to be abandoning the English-educated élite for the intense world of the Mandarin-speaking militants who were either the willing tools of the outlawed Communist movement or its secret members. . . . In November 1954, when he spoke at the founding meeting of the People's Action Party . . . he wore the cotton shirt and wash trousers that were the uniform of the new radical movement, but he spoke in English." Despite the language barrier, Lee became the secretary-general of the P.A.P. in 1955—the position he still holds, after more than thirty-five years. He said at the time, "I would vote for Communism if I had to choose only between Communism and colonialism."

Ten years later, Lee claimed that he hadn't switched sides when he returned from Britain—that he had actually opposed British rule all along. "Let me say this to show you that I am not an Anglophile," Lee told Seymour Topping, of the *Times*, in 1965. "True, I know their culture, their history, their civilization. I have read all about the daffodils, and the bumblebee, and the heigh-ho, merry-ho, and



all the rest. It is part of my schooling. They pumped it into me. And I hated what they did, and I joined up with the Communists to get rid of them. But, you know, they had wisdom."

Throughout the nineteen-fifties, Lee stood solidly behind his leftist allies. He proposed legalizing the Communist Party, and denounced colonialism at every opportunity. "He has warned the English-speaking Chinese that they should either join the revolution or be swept away by it," the *Reporter* magazine noted in May of 1959. "At other times he has sent shudders of apprehension down the spines of the British business community with references to the need for nationalizing banking: he applauded the Indonesian take-over of Dutch property and other assets; and he says quite frankly that he intends to turn Singapore's social system upside down." That month, the British granted Singapore, then widely known as the Red City, limited self-rule, allowing Singaporeans to vote for a parliament but retaining control over internal security, foreign affairs, and defense. The P.A.P., running against an opposition party that was anti-Communist and pro-Western, won forty-three of a total of fifty-one seats, and Lee Kuan Yew became Singapore's first Prime Minister. The *Straits Times*, which had been one of his severest critics, quickly moved its editorial offices to Kuala Lumpur.

What Lee had achieved was surely one of the most extraordinary political maneuvers in history. He had latched onto a pro-Communist movement, usurped its rhetoric, and seized control of it. He borrowed from the Communists a tactic they had been using so successfully all over the world—the popular-front government that gives way to a Communist regime—and used it against them. "The Kuomintang went into a united front with the Communist Party in China, but the Communists won," I was told by Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's leading political scientist, who was until last year its Ambassador to the United Nations. "In Europe, when you had the Social Democrats working with the Communists, the Communists won. Singapore is the world's only example of forming a united front with the Communists and defeating them. Lee looked at how they mobilized and learned from them."

I asked Lee whether at the time he said he would rather be a Communist

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than a colonialist, and advocated nationalization, he was actually flirting with those ideas. "First, we had to get rid of the British," he replied. "To do that, you had to mobilize support from the widest possible group and get as big a majority of the population as you could. If you're not going to shoot the British out, you've got to shake them out, and that means you've got to get the majority with you. First, you've got to get power. Then, having got power, you say, 'What's the problem? Have I said these things? If so, let's forget it.'"

The British understood what Lee was doing; in the nineteen-fifties, when the British routinely imprisoned Chinese leftists, he escaped arrest, because they realized that he would eventually be an ally, and perhaps the only means of forestalling a leftist takeover of Singapore. But the Central Intelligence Agency was not quite so perceptive as the British. In 1960, fearing that Singapore was falling to the Communists, the C.I.A. tried to put the head of Singapore's Internal Security Department on its payroll. The American who made the offer quickly found himself in jail. Then the United States sent a high-ranking official—to this day, Lee won't reveal his name—to offer Lee three million three hundred thousand dollars to keep the affair quiet. Lee countered that instead he would take thirty-three million dollars in economic aid for Singapore. He didn't get it. Five years later, when Lee made the story of the bribe public, the State Department denied it. The Americans directed at Lee what from his point of view were probably the two greatest insults possible: first, they treated him as a banana-republic dictator; then they branded him a liar. A furious Lee called reporters into his office and said he would show them incriminating documents and play them incriminating tapes if the State Department didn't admit the truth. The Americans "are not dealing with Ngo Dinh Diem or Syngman Rhee," Lee told the reporters. "You do not buy and sell this Government." The State Department thereupon confirmed the charge.

"If the British officers in the Special Branch had been as unsophisticated as the C.I.A., I think we would have been forced into the Communist camp," Lee told me. "The C.I.A. didn't really trust the British, because we were running around with the Communists. Obviously, we should have been locked up and disposed of a long time ago. So their conclusion was that the British were inefficient. They wanted to get the jam on us so that they could fix us—believing that we were Communists, I suppose. Why should I take a few million dollars? It's crazy. And then I'm done for."

Lee in fact wasted little time moving against Singapore's leftist Chinese when he came to power. (His government has never shown much interest in distinguishing the non-Communist left from members of the Communist Party. In the early nineteen-sixties, many of Lee's political opponents were espousing socialism, not Communism, but Lee has never hesitated to use the word "Communist" to brand political dissidents of all varieties.) He jailed Chinese-language newspaper editors, cracked down on strikes by labor unions, and organized work brigades of unemployed Chinese youths so that he could reach them before the Communists did. With British help, he engineered a split with the Chinese-speaking radicals he had so forcefully supported in the nineteen-fifties. Never one to pay homage to the concept of free-for-all democracy, Lee explained to me with characteristic directness what had happened. "We had taken office with the Communists in our midst," he said. "The British skillfully, not so much by words but by their behavior, led these Communists to believe that if they could win power constitutionally, by getting a majority in the Legislative Assembly, they would be acceptable as the government, provided they allowed the British bases to stay. They misled the young revolutionaries into believing that they could take power, and the revolutionaries came out to whack us. That brought about a split, an open conflict with the Communists, and on the best possible terms for us. And we won, we carried the day. We never gave them a second chance playing at constitutional games."

The key to Lee's strategy was the merger, in 1963, of Singapore into the Malaysian Federation, joining neighboring Malaya and the British colonies of North Borneo, now called Sabah, and Sarawak, which are on the island of Borneo. It was an enormous

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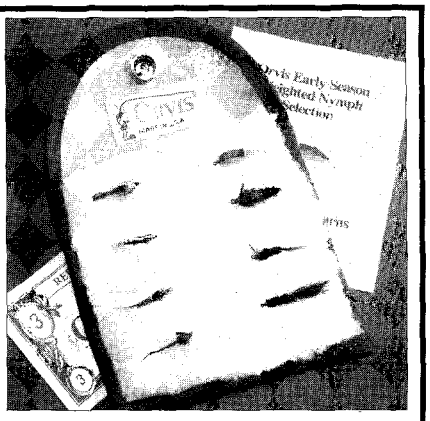

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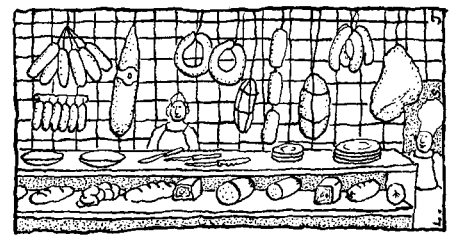
risk. Lee, although he remained Prime Minister of Singapore, had to yield ultimate authority over his island to Abdul Rahman, the powerful Malayan leader known as the Tunku, or prince. Rahman had initially rejected Lee's overtures, fearing that the overwhelmingly Chinese population of Singapore would unite with the thirty-nine per cent of Malaya that was Chinese to oust the Malays from power. So to join the federation Singapore had to accept the condition of much smaller representation in the Malaysian Parliament than its population should have merited—just fifteen seats, one fewer than those granted to Sabah, which had only about a quarter the number of people. Lee also agreed to make Malay the official language of Singapore. At the time, Rahman told an interviewer that he had accepted Singapore because "I don't want a damn Cuba at my feet." I asked Dr. Lee Siew Choh, who had been a leftist member of Singapore's Parliament in the early nineteen-sixties and became one again in 1988, why Lee Kuan Yew had joined the federation on such humiliating terms. "He accepted Malaya without consulting the P.A.P. rank and file," said Dr. Lee, who had spent ten days in jail in 1963 on a charge of coercion against Singapore's government. "Instead of being ruled by London, we became ruled by Kuala Lumpur. Everything we had gained from independence, we lost. On top of that, the terms made Singaporeans second-class citizens. He wanted the federation because it could, if necessary, take action against the opposition and arrest them."

I put the same question to Lee Kuan Yew. "If we were not taken in, there were two perils we faced," he replied. "Economically, we would always be truncated, because we depended on the hinterland of Malaysia for our livelihood. Militarily, it also made no sense to have a small little island. Then, there was the other risk, that on our own we could easily have gone Communist. This was because of the appeal Communism had for the majority of the young Chinese-educated, who believed the Communist revolution in China was a great success."

In hindsight, it's not at all clear that Lee needed the Tunku to keep down the left. His own measures of repression were showing signs of working before Singapore joined the federation, and they have succeeded ever since. Some Singaporeans speculate that another element could have been involved in his decision to join with Malaya: the possibility that Lee Kuan Yew might someday preside over the Malaysian Federation himself. "It was nothing but overweening ego and ambition," Francis Seow, Lee's best-known political opponent, who is now in self-imposed exile in the United States, told me. "He was so confident he could repeat in Malaysia what he did in Singapore."

Considering that Lee transformed the flyspeck of Singapore into a world economic power, one wonders what he might have accomplished for Malaysia, with its vast resources of oil, minerals, and timber, and its much larger population. But this was not to be. In 1964, the P.A.P. made its first foray outside Singapore, contesting ten Malayan seats for Parliament and winning one. Lee now says, "By contesting those seats, we alarmed them, because they could see that we could organize and rally not only Chinese but also Indians and Malays in the towns. The urbanized Malays, like those in Singapore, could be reached on the appeal of fair shares for all." This possibility threw nationalist Malay politicians into turmoil, and they attempted to stir up anti-Chinese sentiment in Malaysia. In August of 1965, saying that the only alternative was to take "repressive measures" against Singapore, Rahman expelled Singapore from the federation. When Lee spoke to his people about the expulsion, he was in tears. I asked him what emotions he had felt at the time. "A tremendous mixture of conflicting thoughts and emotional pulls," he said. "First, the sheer pity of it all. So much work went into it. Second, the dangers of the future, how to make a living, how to defend ourselves in the long term." Many times in the ensuing decades, the world's press, commenting on Singapore's economic uncertainties and on Lee's heavy-handed measures against his political opponents, ventured predictions that his policies would fail. But so far Lee has known but a single failure—the expulsion of Singapore from the federation.



AFTER leaving Malaysia, Singapore faced desperate economic problems. Even under British rule, it had been a major center for trade. But shipping, warehousing, banking, and insurance could not alone provide enough jobs to bring prosperity. The country needed industry, but here the situation seemed hopeless. Singapore's small domestic market wasn't nearly enough to keep factories busy, and Malaysia had erected high tariffs against goods made in Singapore. "Most factories have cut production drastically," *Time* reported of Singapore in 1966. "They are plagued by strike-prone unions, face increasingly stiff competition from aggressive and more experienced manufacturers in Hong Kong, Japan and Formosa. Singapore may face insurmountable odds." The problem was compounded two years later, when the British announced that they would withdraw all their troops by 1972, closing down a huge naval base, three airfields, and other facilities. From the British action alone, Singapore would lose about twenty per cent of its national income.

Yet by 1969 Singapore was in the midst of an economic boom. "Today, a visitor can hardly move around the island for the piles of red mud from hundreds of construction projects," the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that year. Except for a recession in 1985, the boom has continued unabated, producing economic success of a sort that Singapore's neighbors could only dream about. The statistics are stunning. Year after year, Singapore has achieved economic growth of around ten per cent. Unemployment dropped from fourteen per cent in 1966 to six per cent in 1970, three per cent in 1980, and less than two per cent today. Workers get fat pay raises—wages rose an average of more than nine per cent in 1990—yet inflation stays low, averaging just two or three per cent in recent years. Per-capita income grew from five hundred dollars in 1965 to twelve thousand dollars in 1990—a figure surpassed in Asia only by Japan and Brunei. (Japan's higher ranking, however, wouldn't impress a Japanese worker who saw the comparatively spacious apartments that Singaporean workers can afford.) Having attracted

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more than a billion dollars in new investment in 1990, Singapore sits on foreign-exchange reserves of twenty-seven billion dollars. In the mid-nineteen-eighties, with skyscraper hotels rising everywhere and most of colorful old Singapore long since reduced to rubble, predictions were heard of a drop in tourism and a hotel-room glut. But in 1990 hotel occupancy stood at eighty-four per cent, a figure that more exotic Asian countries could only envy. After the 1985 recession struck Singapore, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in 1986, "The bonanza years are over." Two years later, the newspaper headlined an article, "SINGAPORE PLANNERS SEEK WAYS TO CURB NATION'S SURGING, DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH."

Singapore's economic miracle owes something to the fact that what might look like free-market capitalism is actually a capitalism carefully controlled and orchestrated by the government. If the people of Singapore have to make sacrifices to keep the economy steaming ahead, the government will impose those sacrifices by fiat. Practically all unionized workers, who make up twenty-two per cent of the work force, belong to the National Trades Union Congress, which in everything but name is an arm of the government; its general secretary, Ong Teng Cheong, is also a deputy prime minister. The last strike in Singapore was five years ago, and came about only after an American-owned company rejected a recommendation of the Ministry of Labor. In 1969, port workers threatened to strike, but Lee Kuan Yew told them that he would consider such a strike to be "high treason," and they backed down. To counter the 1985 recession, the government in effect cut wages, by decreeing a sixty-per-cent reduction in employer contributions to a social-security-type fund for workers. "Basically, the union, government, and employers understand that we're all in the same boat," Ong told me. "If the oars clash, the boat won't move. From time to time, we have economic policies painful to some or all workers. We have to pursue the policies, and explain to workers why the decision was necessary."

But many countries have authoritarian governments, and, no matter what their political stripe, their meddling in the economy inevitably leads to disaster. Three factors make Singapore's government different. First, the leaders are incorruptible; their decisions are designed to benefit the country, and not anyone's Swiss bank account. Second, they are unusually competent. Talented young Singaporeans get generous scholarships, including grants for overseas study, if they agree to enter government service. They can rise rapidly through the ranks, reaching top-level positions by their mid-thirties and earning salaries comparable with those paid by private industry. And in time, since the government owns or has a share in so many Singaporean companies, they can slip into comfortable second careers as corporate executives. Finally, Singapore's government is different because its economic planners make pragmatic decisions instead of following rigid textbook rules for running the economy. If a policy works, they continue it; if it doesn't work, they drop it and try something else. This philosophy follows the style set by Lee Kuan Yew. Although to this day Lee hasn't deviated from his perception of a Communist threat to Singapore, he has proved flexible in other areas; for example, the man who supported the speaking of Mandarin in the nineteen-fifties to get the radicals on his side, and suppressed Mandarin in the nineteen-sixties because it was the language of those Singaporeans who identified with the Chinese revolution, now pushes Mandarin as a sort of vaccine to immunize the Chinese majority against the decadence of Western culture.

What the economic planners devised for Singapore was a way, in effect, of bringing a starving child to robust health by letting someone else pay for the food. To build its economy, Singapore needed entrepreneurs with skills and investment capital. It found the answer in an institution that most other Third World countries whose governments came to power on anticolonial rhetoric shunned: the multinational corporation. The multinationals would use their capital to build factories that could employ hundreds of thousands of Singaporeans. They would bring to Singapore technology and expertise that the locals

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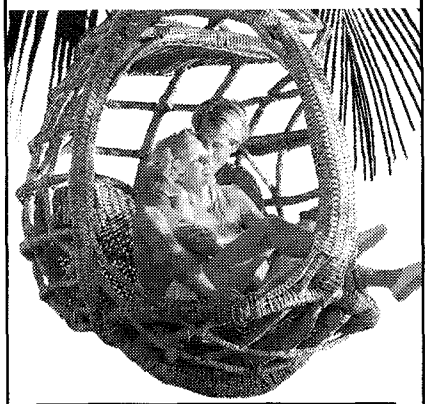

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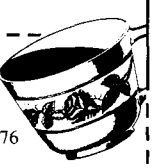

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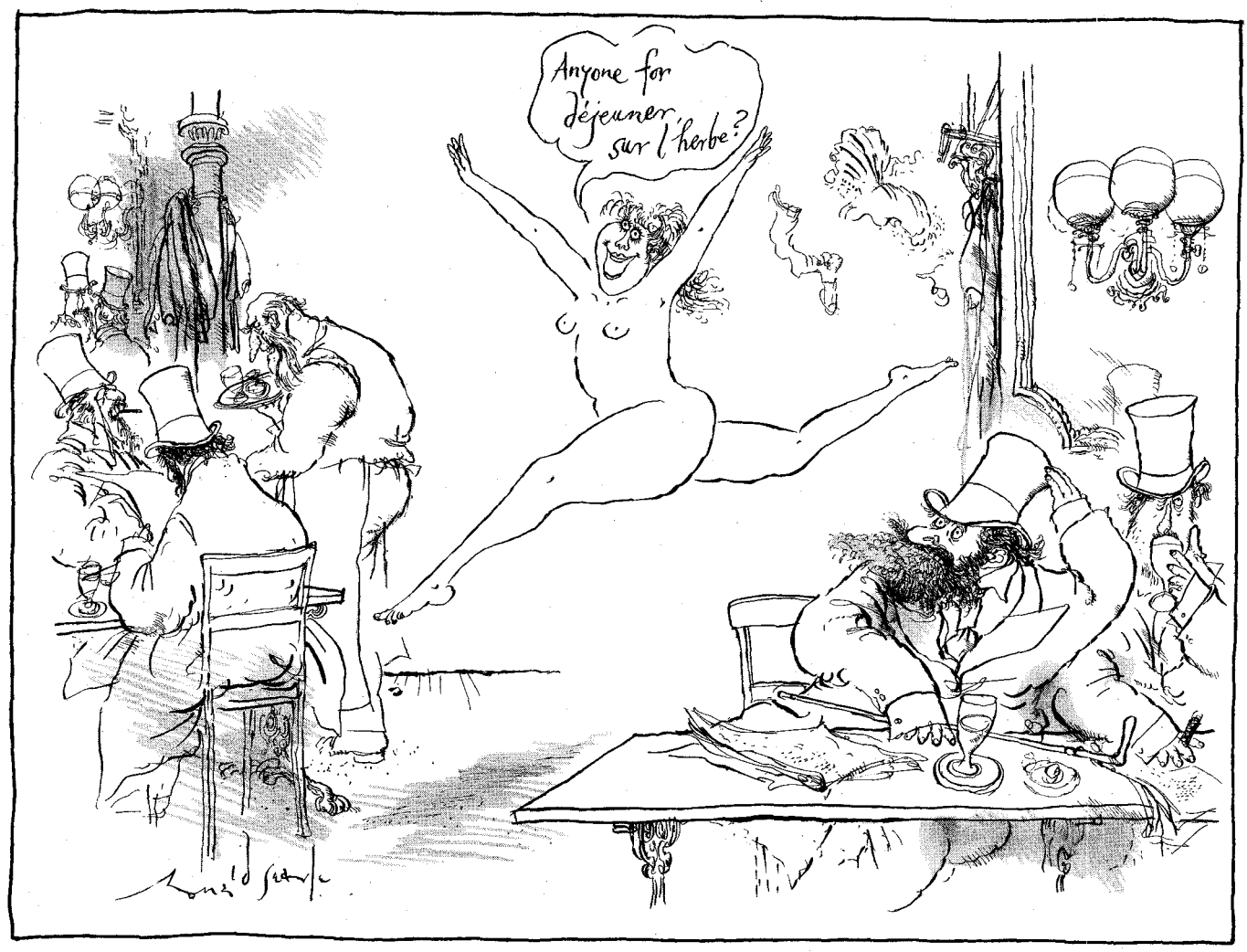

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could learn. And, with their worldwide operations, they would create a global market for made-in-Singapore products. To lure multinationals, Singapore offered far more than the usual tax breaks. The nation built an impressive infrastructure, including transportation and communications second to none in Asia. To develop a skilled work force, schools emphasized technological education. The government made certain that no militant labor unions, no strikes, and no opposition parties threatening nationalization would imperil the country's stability. Above all, instead of imposing red tape, the government acted as a partner in expediting new enterprises. Singapore built shells of factories on speculation, so that arriving companies wouldn't have to spend time planning a new building from the ground up. It created an agency, the Economic Development Board, as a one-stop service to negotiate tax concessions and secure all the necessary approvals from various government agencies. In 1969, Texas Instruments established its first facility in Singapore—a plant to manufacture integrated circuits. The first product came off the assembly line just three months after discussions started.

The ultimate result of all this is that Singapore has built its industrial base with more than eighty per cent of the capital coming from foreigners, and the inflow of capital is still continuing. Today, Singapore is the world's second-largest port, after Rotterdam; the banking center of southern Asia; the third-largest oil refiner, after Houston and Rotterdam; the producer of more than half of the world's computer disk drives; and a major center of shipbuilding, telecommunications equipment, electronic components, computer peripherals and software, and pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. Three thousand foreign companies have set up operations in Singapore, including eight hundred from the United States, which is the largest foreign investor. Carlton J. Parker, the managing director of General Automation Singapore, which is a subsidiary of an American computer company, says the system is so fair that he can win bids for government contracts even when his competitor is a firm owned by the Singapore government. "You can explain how your stuff works, what the intelligence is behind it, and you'll win the contract," he says. "If this could happen in places like Indonesia and the Philippines, who knows what their economies would be like? Here I have never had to offer a bribe; in the Philippines, nothing would happen without one. If you ask a question about specifications, it has to be in writing, and a copy goes to everyone bidding, so that we're all on an equal footing. My general im-

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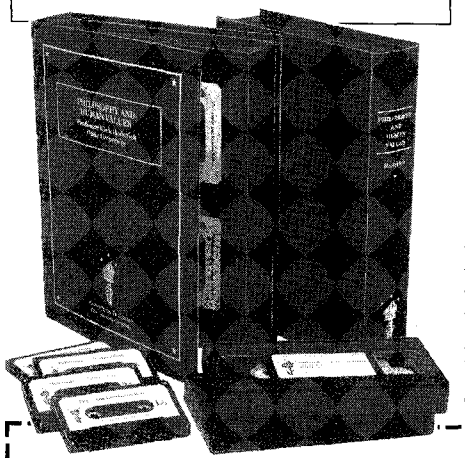

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pression is that these things go more smoothly here than in the United States."

Singapore government officials refuse to accept the inevitability of economic reverses of any sort. When the British gave up their military facilities, the government converted the naval base into a commercial shipyard, and none of its three thousand employees had to miss a day's work. The Royal Air Force's Changi Air Field was transformed into one of the world's best airports, plus a regional center for aircraft maintenance. As is typical of Singapore, Changi's two terminals are shapeless and lack any hint of aesthetic distinction, but no other airport functions so efficiently. The newly opened Terminal No. 2—named Airtropolis, a word that few Chinese can pronounce—has a sauna, a gymnasium, a nursery, a business center, eleven restaurants, and fifty-one shops, which aren't allowed to charge prices higher than those in the city. In-transit passengers with more than two hours between planes can sign up for a free city tour.

Economic planners averted another potential crisis a decade or more ago, when they saw that Singapore couldn't continue to compete with Hong Kong, Bangkok, and other Asian cities for factories that turn out cheap goods produced by low-cost labor. Singapore decided to change its emphasis to high-technology products—a gamble that, if successful, would dramatically improve the island's standard of living. To drive out low-wage industries like textiles and shoes, the government forced wages up; Singaporeans got an average wage increase of fourteen per cent in 1982 alone. As a way to lure high-tech enterprises, the government built a "science park," with research facilities for biotechnology, microelectronics, and other growing fields. If a pioneering company had a good idea but no capital, it could locate in Singapore and find a willing investment partner in Singapore's government. The over-all strategy brought a flood of high-tech companies to Singapore's door.

Now the government, never one to rest on its laurels where the economy is concerned, is pushing two new plans to spur growth. The first represents a diversification move: taking some of the nation's foreign reserves and investing them in companies overseas—a plan that includes building schools abroad for the children of Singaporeans sent to work for those companies. The second is what is called a growth triangle. Instead of pushing out the remaining low-wage factories and rejecting new ones, Singapore is working jointly with Malaysia and Indonesia to locate such factories in the southern Malaysian state of Johore and in Indonesia's Riau Islands—both adjacent to Singapore—while keeping the manufacturers' corporate headquarters in Singapore itself. The strategy is brilliant: not only does Singapore get new skilled jobs but the country—a Chinese island dwarfed by neighboring Muslim states that posed a real threat in the nineteen-sixties—can make the Malaysian and Indonesian economies increasingly dependent on Singapore's existence. "In the Riau Islands, they've set up a joint venture with Indonesians," a Western diplomat explained to me. "This Riau authority is getting a lot of clout to bypass Jakarta's bureaucracy. If Jakarta were running it alone, nothing would happen. Jakarta has had a plan to develop the islands since the mid-nineteen-seventies, and it had been ninety-five per cent a failure. But now it's taking off. You have Singapore actively assisting Western companies to wade through the bureaucracy and corruption in Malaysia and Indonesia. Creating an economic region with Singapore as the hub insures Singapore's economic growth. And it's also providing political stability because of the growing economic interdependence."

Singapore, the bastion of capitalism, has never hesitated to establish government-owned companies. The government owns or controls some of the biggest banks and insurance companies and also shipyards, hotels, an oil refinery, a steelmill, trading organizations, and many other enterprises. At one point, it owned a driving range for golfers. Not surprisingly, the government's business ventures are highly profitable—even the subway system and the power company—and now that stock in some of the ventures is being sold to the public, in a privatization move, the government is awash in cash. The best known of the government-owned enterprises is Singapore Airlines, which is a paragon of good management. The airline has made a profit every year since its founding, in 1972, and it earned over five hundred million dollars in the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 1991—a time when many other airlines had huge losses because the Gulf War reduced travel. Although Singapore is racked by violent thunderstorms most afternoons, Singapore Airlines has never had a crash. It upgrades its fleet so often that it is now replacing all its Boeing 747s with the newest model, the long-range 747-400.

Although the government's big investments in private industry might run counter to the tenets of capitalism, Lee Kuan Yew maintains that they have been a vital ingredient in Singapore's economic success. "The only reason the government moved in was that no entrepreneur had the guts and the gumption and the capital to go in on his own," Lee told me. "So we went in and got it going, using government officials who had the drive and the flair. And we are prepared to go into more high-risk areas where Singaporean entrepreneurs are unable to carry that risk, either for lack of daring or for lack of capital."

Singapore acquired the capital to make these investments in an inventive way. The government devised a scheme, or plan—in Singapore, plans are always referred to as schemes—for forced savings on a huge scale. Called the Central Provident Fund, it now takes thirty-four per cent of a worker's salary for a special retirement account; in the past, as much as forty per cent has been withheld. (By manipulating the percentage, the government can inject funds into the economy in periods of recession and cause more to be withheld during boom times, when inflation threatens.) The account pays interest, and the worker can withdraw funds before retirement, but for only two reasons: to buy certain blue-chip stocks, like Singapore Airlines, or to buy a house or an apartment. The fund simultaneously accomplishes three important goals: the government gets a huge pool of investment capital, which at the end of 1990 stood at twenty-three billion dollars; workers gain a stake in the capitalist system through their stock purchases, and help support it at the same time; and Singapore becomes a nation of homeowners—and homeowners want prosperity and political stability.

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Most Singaporeans—eighty-seven per cent of them—live in the sterile government-built apartment towers, which in some areas stretch so far that there is bus service from one side of an apartment block to the other. From the outside, these apartment blocks could be taken for a New York City housing project: all buildings identical, each without a hint of architectural merit. But the resemblance to New York City ends at their doors, for inside they're immaculate—completely free of vandalism, graffiti, or litter. The explanation lies in the fact that ninety per cent of these units—and eighty per cent of Singapore's dwellings over all—are owned by the families who live in them, and people aren't going to let the value of their investment drop because the building isn't kept up. The Singapore government builds the towers and then offers the apartments for sale, allowing the buyers to use their Central Provident money for both the down payment and the monthly mortgage payment. A five-room apartment far away from the central city typically sells for around forty-five thousand dollars; a unit closer in costs at least fifty per cent more. An owner is free to sell the apartment after five years, and people who bought their apartments in the nineteen-seventies can now get somewhere between two and four times the original purchase price. Though the government has no love for those who depend on welfare, it isn't about to see impoverished people sleeping on Singapore's streets, so it rents some of the older, smaller apartments at heavily subsidized prices. Several hundred people—such as families in which the father has been arrested for drug peddling and the mother and children are left penniless—live in government housing free.

Creating a nation of homeowners has done more than keep the housing stock from deteriorating; it has also provided insurance against political or racial revolution, since those who rebel would be acting against their own economic interests. "Underneath everything is the housing policy," Mary Lee, a Singapore journalist, says. "An ordinary office worker can own his own apartment—a situation that would be the envy of anyone in the United States. The government decided that the way to keep the population quiet was to give everyone a stake." The housing situation isn't quite tidy enough,

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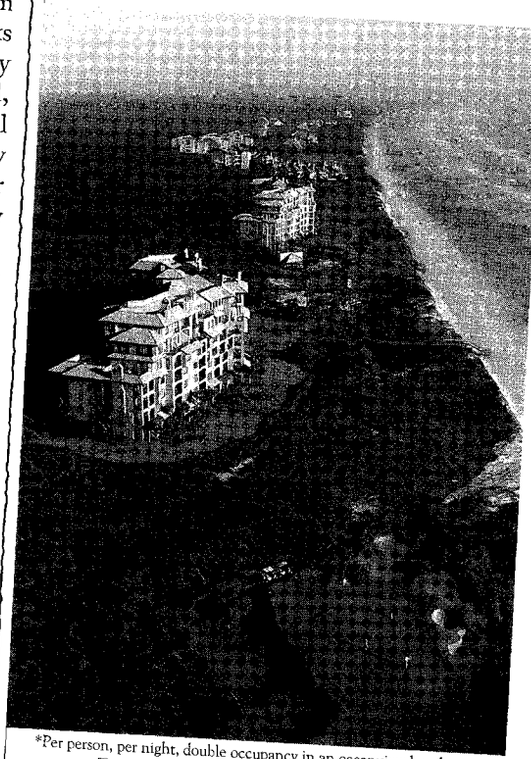

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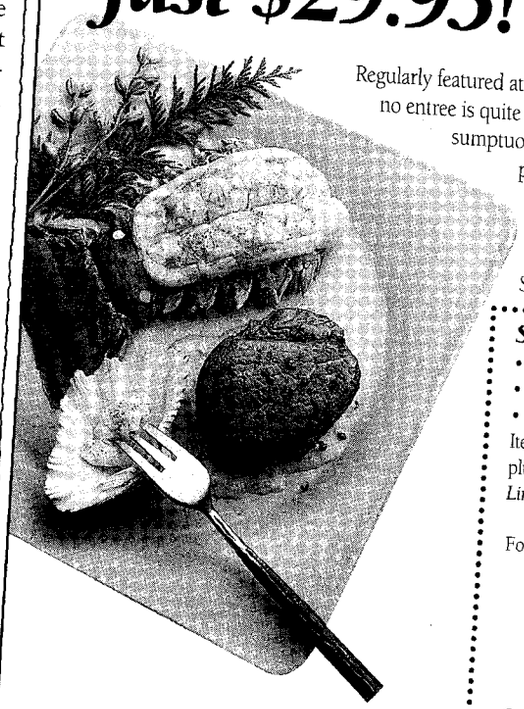

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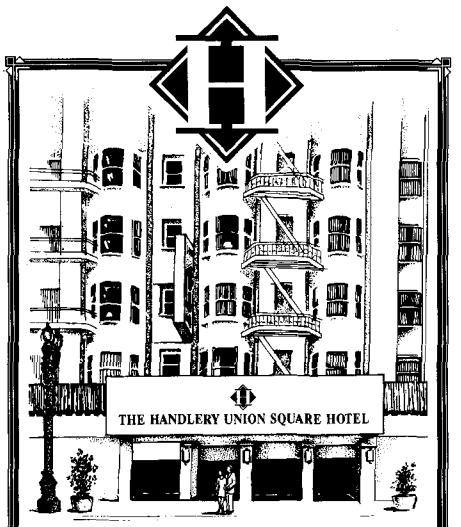

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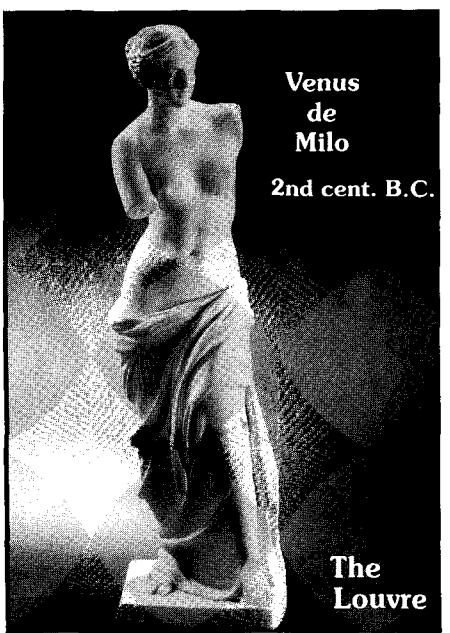

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however, to deter the government's rulemakers from stepping in, as they do in almost every other aspect of Singapore life. A single person can buy only a small apartment, and in a less popular area, because "the government thinks if you make it easier for singles they won't get married, and we want to encourage them to have families," I was told by Lim Hng Kiang, then the chief executive officer of the Housing and Development Board. The government also sets size limits for dogs allowed to live in its apartment buildings. And, just in case the pride of homeownership is overwhelmed by an urgent situation, elevators in the apartment blocks are equipped with urine detectors. When the detector senses the ammonia in urine, it locks the elevator doors and activates a hidden camera. An alarm rings at the Housing and Development Board, and the police are dispatched. If the culprit is a child, the parents get a letter of warning. An adult finds himself faced with another of those stiff Singapore fines, and this one can amount to as much as twelve hundred and forty dollars. On occasion, moreover, the offender will discover his name, or even his picture, in the *Straits Times*. Perhaps fearing that the threat of a fine and unwanted publicity might not be enough, the government also tries to reason with its citizens. When I visited a housing project, I saw a large photographic exhibit on how to take proper care of elevators. One panel was captioned, "Urine causes the lift parts to corrode and makes the elevator smelly."

WHILE Singapore is hardly the entertainment center of Asia, it does offer one pleasant distraction from making money and obeying rules. On days off, families can take an aerial tramway to nearby Sentosa Island, a large and beautiful theme park. Sentosa Island features a wax museum depicting pioneers of Singapore, an old fort from colonial times, nature walks, formal gardens, birds, and displays of coral and butterflies. A monorail circles the island; the stops are numbered, and visitors get a brochure listing the attractions at each stop. The brochure, however, won't inform them about Sentosa Island's one permanent resident, who lives at Stop No. 6, in a guardhouse next to the old fort. Singaporeans seem to have little sense of irony, but tourists who happen upon him and hear his story are astonished to find such a man in a theme park. His name is Chia Thye Poh, and he is currently Singapore's only political prisoner—a man whose life bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Nelson Mandela.

No one guards Chia Thye Poh these days. He is free to receive visitors; his room in the guardhouse, though it is sparsely furnished, has a telephone, and he is confined to Sentosa Island only from 9 P.M. to 6 A.M. For this degree of freedom, however, Chia Thye Poh has paid a very high price—more than twenty-two years in jail. It's hard to envision Chia as an enemy of anyone, and he certainly doesn't seem a threat to the powerful nation of Singapore. When I visited him, I found a rail-thin man wearing black-rimmed glasses, shower sandals, and white shorts, who was soft-spoken, almost meek, and extraordinarily deferential. He showed a constant concern about my comfort—going to the fort's snack bar to get me a drink, moving my chair so that I would be more directly under the fan. Chia's deeply rooted graciousness and a total absence of ego made his story all the more poignant.

From 1963 to 1966, Chia, a university lecturer in physics, was a Member of Parliament from the Barisan Sosialis Party (*barisan* is a Malay word for "front"), a left-leaning group that had split with Lee Kuan Yew's P.A.P. over the issue of Singapore's joining the Malaysian Federation. "We wanted a genuinely democratic Malaysia, including Singapore," Chia said. "We fought for genuine parliamentary democracy, for a rule of law, not rule by one or two ministers. The PAP branded this as toeing the line of the Communist Party of Malaya. After the 1963 elections, three opposition M.P.s were arrested, and two more in 1966. There were hundreds of other arrests over those years, because many people went out to demonstrate. The government used all means to try to suppress the opposition. In October of 1966, the Barisan M.P.s resigned because of government harassment. Important issues like Singapore's withdrawal from the federation were never debated in Parliament, since Parliament had become a rubber stamp."

Three weeks after the resignations, Chia was one of the organizers of a

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rally to protest the Vietnam War which took place on the eve of a visit to Singapore by President Lyndon Johnson. The rally marked Chia's last day of freedom. He was arrested in the course of the rally, under provisions of the Internal Security Act, which Singapore's government has used against hundreds of political opponents. The act, inherited from the British, allows detention for an unlimited number of two-year periods, without charges and without judicial review. "I was never charged, never brought to trial, never convicted of anything," Chia told me. Only nineteen years later, in 1985, did the government give its first official explanation for his arrest: the Minister of Home Affairs, in an address to Parliament, accused Chia of having infiltrated the Barisan Sosialis to destabilize the government through "Communist united-front activities." Chia told me, "They released no sort of documents. I have never been a member of any Communist Party; I was just performing my duties as an M.P. My activities were all legal, peaceful, and constitutional. I have never advocated violence, and have never been charged with any offense of violence, let alone convicted."

Chia, unlike most other political detainees in Singapore, resisted all attempts to extract a confession. "They tried very hard to break prisoners, to extract confessions from them, to have them confess on television," Chia said. "They made me pay a very high price for not kowtowing to them. In 1966, they put me in a dark cell and said some people had gone insane under such conditions. Sometimes you could hear people kicking the doors as if they had gone insane. I went from one prison to another, and was in solitary confinement several times. Sometimes I was deprived of reading material for months at a stretch. They said that there's no end to this, that it will go on year after year if I don't confess, that even if I'm made of steel they have means to break me. I told them that I had nothing to confess, and that if the government had evidence it should try me in open court, where I could see the evidence against me and defend myself. There were daylong interrogations in a freezing-cold room. They pressured my family. But I always thought, No matter how long they keep me this way, someday they will have to release me, because I'm innocent and I have support. It's part of the broad struggle for democracy all over the world. When you are in solitary, there is nothing in the cell. But you can explore, and see faint scribblings from previous prisoners. I still remember one of them. It was a poem in Chinese: 'Ten years behind bars / Never too late / Thousands of ordeals / My spirit steeled.' When you were alone and helpless, and you saw things like that, you were encouraged."

The parallel between Chia Thye Poh and Nelson Mandela, two prisoners of conscience accused of Communist subversion, is striking. Each was in jail for more than twenty years, at least part of the time confined to an island. Each had the opportunity to go free if he would abandon his political goals, and each refused. Chia said that the similarity wasn't lost on his interrogators. "They were telling me that Mandela remained in jail because he had lots of outside support," Chia said. "But they said there's no point in my remaining in jail, because no one remembers me. Mandela at least got a chance to defend himself in court, and now he's a free man. He can travel all over the world. He can take part in politics in South Africa, where the situation is far more tense than in Singapore. But I'm still not free. I don't know why the government should keep me here."

Singapore is clearly different from South Africa: the denial of rights is much more arbitrary, and has never been aimed exclusively at the Malay and Indian minorities. Nor is Singapore—as even some former political detainees pointed out when I interviewed them—like Argentina under the generals. "The government knows where to stop," I was told by one of these detainees, who asked not to be identified. "They don't shoot us. They don't maim us. They allow you rehabilitation after you're out." This man said that while he was in jail he was "stripped on and off, blindfolded for three days, kept in an underground windowless room that was very cold." He added, "They had an interrogator who could shout into my ears for twelve hours straight. But on the tenth day, when I was hyperventilating from the cold and the pressure, they rushed me to the hospital."

Yet, short of physical torture and disappearances at night, the human-rights record of the Singapore government much more resembles that of a Third World dictatorship than that of an industrial and technological powerhouse whose economy is intertwined with that of the West. Singapore is a prosperous nation with little racial animosity, no external threat, and a government that is genuinely popular, because of the economic growth it has brought. In the eyes

"I wish we could hang out more, too. But, as you know, in addition to the earth, the sun, and the moon, there is now also Rhoda."

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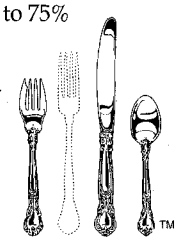

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of many Westerners, Singapore should have achieved political, cultural, and social freedom as an inevitable companion to the high level of economic development. But Singapore's record lags not only in contrast to the records of Western democracies but also when it is compared with the records of its neighbors, who have their own problems with human rights. Singapore manages to control its citizens more pervasively than does Indonesia, a country that has known bloody repression. It allows its press less freedom than does Thailand, even now, almost a year after that nation's democratically elected government fell to a military coup. The city of Penang, in Malaysia—a nation that has its own Internal Security Act and whose government frequently takes heavy-handed action against political opponents—is filled with public-interest groups that freely criticize the government, but such groups have never been allowed to exist in Singapore.

Several studies of human rights in Singapore have produced substantial evidence that the rule of law has on many occasions fallen victim to the whim of government. In July of 1989, the Committee on International Human Rights of the New York City Bar Association visited Singapore to prepare a report financed by the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. The report, released in December of 1990, amounts to a devastating indictment. "What emerges from this review is a government that has been willing to decimate the rule of law for the benefit of its political interests," the report states. "Lawyers have been cowed to passivity, judges are kept on a short leash, and the law has been manipulated so that gaping holes exist in the system of restraints on government action toward the individual. Singapore is not a country in which individual rights have significant meaning." The United States government, although it is a close ally of Singapore, has also sharply criticized its human-rights record. The State Department's latest human-rights report, issued in March of 1991, presents an extensive catalogue of abuses. It speaks of "political control of the press, courts, and religion," and points to "credible reports" of mistreatment of detainees and "surveillance of opposition or dissident figures as well as some religious leaders."

Singapore abolished trial by jury in 1969, and judges, according to the State Department report, "have close ties to the Government and its leaders" and "are beholden to the Government for their appointments." In December of 1988, a Singapore appellate court ruled against the government, ordering the release of four prisoners detained under the Internal Security Act. The next month, Parliament amended the constitution to eliminate judicial review of Internal Security Act detentions, and the amendment was made retroactive to 1971. In 1990, Parliament passed what is called the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, giving the government power to arrest religious workers who it feels are engaging in politics; this act also barred judicial review of their cases. Persons caught breaking into a house or stealing a car, and perpetrators of several other crimes, are subject to lashes with a cane as well as prison; in 1989, the government also decided to cane illegal immigrants. The Bar Association report describes the procedure: "When the rattan hits the bared buttocks, the skin disintegrates, leaving initially a white line and then a flow of blood. The victim must lie on his front for three weeks to a month because the buttocks are so sore."

The feeling of intimidation is increased by laws that are kept on the books but are not enforced, since they could be at any time. During the Vietnam War years, when long hair was connected with drugs and dissent, Singapore police would pull long-haired youths off the streets for involuntary haircuts. Though the regulation against "hair reaching below an ordinary shirt collar" remains, it is now violated by many young Malays. Though homosexuality can be punished by anything up to life imprisonment, one of the largest discothèques becomes male-only every Sunday night, and hundreds of young gay Chinese men gather there to dance and to flirt—but such activities are kept discreet. Though prostitution is illegal, three streets are lined with brothels, and the government requires all prostitutes to get a venereal-disease check every two weeks and an HIV test every three months. Many Singaporean men, however,

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prefer to violate Thailand's prostitution laws.

Opponents of the government have a difficult life in Singapore. The State Department report charges that in the universities "tenure and renewal of appointments can be, and have been, refused to academics whose work deviates from government views." It also points to "substantial evidence that the authorities conduct clandestine searches of the baggage of opposition figures in the airport baggage-handling area." Demonstrations, except for those supporting the government, almost never occur in Singapore. In fact, except for social gatherings, assemblies of more than five people in public must have police permission. When I interviewed Prime Minister Goh, the government had just announced sharp tuition increases for the universities. I asked him why students wouldn't be allowed to unfurl a banner requesting that the increases be scaled back. "If you allow students to do so, then workers will begin to do so over the slightest grievance," Goh replied. "And if you have several such demonstrations, right away the impression is created that government is not in control of the situation—that the place may became unstable. That will have an impact on foreign investors."

In the area of human rights, the Bar Association committee sees a design resembling that of the former Marxist governments of Eastern Europe. "A basic strategy of the totalitarian governments that were recently toppled in Eastern Europe was to keep society atomized, to keep discontent something that can be whispered among friends but that cannot be transformed into a social movement because people are too fearful to join together as a political force," the report says. "This effort to prevent the formation of a civil society has been the principal strategy of the Singapore government."

When I interviewed a member of the political opposition, he called Singapore "a city of fear." There is much evidence to support this characterization. For instance, in 1990 Russell Heng, who is now a researcher for the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, wrote a study on Singapore which was called "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Wealth" and was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. "Two years ago, a Cabinet Minister urged academics and professionals to speak up," he noted in the study. "But when two reporters tried to get the reaction of eighteen of them to the Minister's encouragement, six preferred to keep their views to themselves. Of the remaining twelve, six spoke only on condition of anonymity." Heng also observed that "talking to people for this essay brought some firsthand experience of the irrational fear which exists even among the best-educated Singaporeans," and noted, "One example would be those who rejected phone interviews. Yet others spoke in measured tones and then sent word in a roundabout way to say that they would have said things differently if they were not speaking on the phone."

I asked a high-ranking Singapore official about this climate of fear. The official seemed to have been anointed the house critic of the Singapore government, for he had frequently offered criticisms without repercussion, and in reply to my questions he characterized the attitude of Singaporeans as "Play it safe," and explained, "If you're not sure, don't do it. This syndrome breeds sycophancy. Our friends point out to us that all critics of government are not treated as generously as I am." But, later, the official in effect confirmed his own observation by asking that his name not be used in the article.

I saw several examples of the pervasive fear in my month in Singapore. On two occasions, when I met opponents of the government at hotels for lunch they pointed to people in the lobby and said they were agents of the I.S.D. who were watching us. (I doubted it, figuring that the Singapore government was too competent to allow its security agents to be detected so easily.) Another time, I interviewed an American in the publishing business in Singapore. He later called back, apologizing profusely, to say that he was about to buy an apartment, but first he wanted to know if I was planning to quote him as saying anything critical, because he feared that any such remark would result in his expulsion from the country. And one day, when I beeped my answering machine in Berkeley from my Singapore hotel room, I found a message giving me a phone number in Singapore to call. "Don't identify yourself in any way," the message said. "Just make an appointment to have lunch." I followed the instructions, and found myself meeting an establishment journalist. All during lunch, as this journalist described repression in Singapore, he kept glancing nervously over his shoulder, as if he thought he was about to be snatched away. "I never ask questions at press conferences, because if you do they take note of you," he told me. "A number of journalists have lost their jobs." This man held such a negative view of Lee Kuan Yew that he predicted, "There will be a Nuremberg trial in Singapore if Lee loses power—I'm absolutely convinced of it. I see him in no different position from the Shah of Iran or Marcos. Each and every 'Communist' he has detained is not a Communist but an effective political opponent."

The climate of intimidation in Singapore was fuelled by a series of events that began in 1987, when the government initiated a crackdown that eventually included actions against Catholic church workers, a prominent attorney who had been Solicitor General of Singapore, and a diplomat at the American Embassy, who was summarily expelled from the country. These actions seemed to Westerners, at least, to make little sense, because they came at a time when the government appeared to be under no threat whatsoever, from either domestic or foreign opponents; few people could imagine that the political opposition would win more than four or five of the eighty-one seats in Parliament in the September, 1988, elections, since it then held only two seats. The crackdown began in May and June of 1987, when the government arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act twenty-two young social activists, several of them Catholic lay workers. The alleged local ringleader was Vincent Cheng, a former seminarian who had been involved in church-related activities for more than a decade; at the time of his detention, Cheng was helping Filipino women who had been brought to Singapore as maids and then mistreated. The government contended that the twenty-two were part of a "Marxist conspiracy to subvert the existing social and po-

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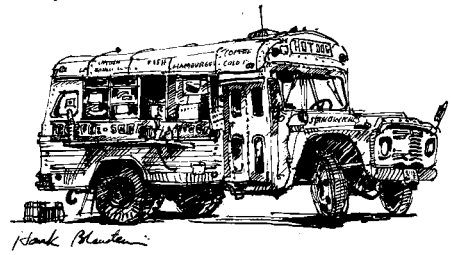
litical system in Singapore through Communist united-front tactics to establish a Communist state." The New York City Bar Association committee investigated these arrests, and its report charges that the detainees were subjected to prolonged sleep deprivation and extended exposure to cold, and that at least seven suffered physical abuse in the form of blows and slaps. By the end of 1987, Singapore's television viewers had been treated to their videotaped confessions, which the Bar Association contends were heavily edited, and all but Vincent Cheng had been freed. The terms of their release included a provision that they would not associate with one another in the future. When a British lawyer active in defending Singapore dissidents took some of them to a restaurant, the Bar Association report states, each had to sit at a separate table, and he rotated among them.

In April of 1988, nine of the original detainees released a public statement describing their mistreatment in prison and declaring that they had been advocating more democracy and freedom, not a Communist state. Eight of the signers of that statement were rearrested the same day; the ninth was out of the country. The government, which loves to pounce on its victims with the claws of convoluted logic, said that it made these arrests because the former detainees were now claiming innocence, and therefore they hadn't been properly rehabilitated and might still be a danger to the state. This time, the government also put Patrick Seong, one of the lawyers for the detainees, in jail for a month; Seong had been handling his first case outside his usual field, commercial litigation, having agreed to represent several of the defendants because they couldn't find an experienced lawyer willing to take the risk. Seven of the eight who were rearrested quickly agreed to repudiate their public statement, and they signed the equivalent of affidavits reaffirming the truth of their previous confessions. According to the Bar Association's report, the affidavits meant that they would be in criminal jeopardy if they ever tried to issue a contrary statement in the future. But the eighth, a lawyer named Teo Soh Lung, who had founded a legal-aid group for criminal defendants, refused. Instead, she filed a writ of habeas corpus, and for her rebellion she had to stay in jail two more years. Teo and Vincent Cheng were finally released in June of 1990.

Cheng, rehabilitated, now works in Singapore as a foot reflexologist; foot massage, many Singaporeans believe, promotes healing and relieves stress. I wanted to interview Cheng but found that there was a Catch-22. A vaguely worded clause in his release agreement indicated that he would have to get permission from the Internal Security Department for any interview. But the mere act of applying to the I.S.D. could mean that he hadn't been sufficiently rehabilitated, since he still wanted to talk about the past. Consequently, he could be sent back to jail.

Instead, I set about trying to see a videotape of Cheng's confession, which had been televised by the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation in 1987. The response I got to this request illustrated the observation about Singapore's climate of fear. An SBC producer informed me that permission would have to come from the Prime Minister's press secretary; the press secretary, however, said that he would have to take it to the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Information and the Arts, who was the agency's highest-ranking civil servant. Finally, permission was granted, and one journalist told me privately that he was certain Lee Kuan Yew himself had actually made the decision. Several days later, I sat in a room of the SBC building witnessing an astonishing event. On the tape, four journalists, including a Malay and an Indian, asked Cheng a series of questions about Marxist connections. Although they had pens and notebooks, and the camera switched to them frequently, I never saw any of them taking a note. The sound quality and the picture sequence constantly changed, as if pieces of tape had been spliced, and at one point Cheng's voice wasn't synchronized with his lips. Cheng, thin and frail-looking and soft-spoken, readily confessed to a series of connections with various leftist groups. Some of his answers sounded ludicrously stilted. At one point, he said, "My leftist thinking always left me



biased against multinationals. What I didn't understand was whether Singapore can exist without multinationals' contributing to our economy. . . . During my detention, I was given the opportunity to understand Singapore better. I realized I needed to be more positive, to contribute to Singapore." At another point, he noted, "I realize it is very important I take into account the reality of Singapore—Singapore's vulnerability, for example." A friend of Cheng's told me later, "The only way he could protest against this forced interview was to comb his hair in the opposite direction, as a sign it wasn't him."

After seeing the tape, I interviewed a man who, years before Cheng, had also had to make a confession on television about his leftist connections. I mentioned the eerie feeling I'd had in watching Cheng's confession—the feeling that I could just as easily have been in Berlin in 1938, or in Moscow in 1952. The man, who had agreed to the interview on the condition that I not identify him, bridled. "The public confession is very Chinese," he said. "Not to get at the offender but to give a lesson to the audience. It would be a grave insult to Singaporeans if you took the form of these detentions and confessions and simplistically looked at it in your own cultural context. Then it becomes almost Nazi-like behavior; you lump it with North Korea. But when you live here, you realize that Singapore is authoritarian but not by any means totalitarian. The idea is to humiliate people. It's the act of humiliation, not the content of the confession, that is important, to serve as a warning to others."

Cheng and the other social activists were not the only victims of the 1987-1988 crackdown. Another was Francis Seow, who ended up in the United States, his career in Singapore shattered. Seow had been a close associate of Lee, serving as Solicitor General from 1969 to 1972, and, starting in 1985, as the president of the Law Society, Singapore's equivalent of the American Bar Association. Under Seow's leadership, the Law Society assumed an increasingly independent role, commenting on proposed legislation—a function that the government then outlawed, in 1986. Early in 1988, Seow broke with the government and planned to run for Parliament as an opposition candidate. In May of that year, however, he appeared in court to

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represent Teo Soh Lung, the one dissident who wouldn't bow to the government, and Patrick Seong, the lawyer for the eight dissidents who himself had been arrested. Hours after his court appearance, Seow was arrested, charged with being in "close contact" with an American Embassy diplomat, the political officer E. Mason Hendrickson. Singapore's government expelled Hendrickson from the country, alleging that he had been meeting with anti-government lawyers "to manipulate and instigate Singaporeans, in order to bring about a particular political outcome." (Seow says that his first meeting with Hendrickson was actually to arrange a cocktail party for visiting American judges.) The government released Seow after seventy-two days, in time for him to run for Parliament but not to organize a broad opposition movement. In the September elections, the P.A.P. took all but one seat, the sole elected opposition member being a lawyer named Chiam See Tong. Seow, however, finished high enough to win a "non-constituency seat"—a special seat with limited voting rights. (To make sure that Parliament had the window dressing of at least a token opposition, the government had created these special seats for opposition candidates who came closest to winning. They would be doled out as necessary to bring the number of opposition members to three.) The government then delayed the opening of Parliament for five months, saying that its building needed renovation. By the time Parliament finally opened, Seow, who was in the United States for treatment of a heart problem, had been convicted in absentia for tax evasion and fined an amount sufficient to bar him under the law from taking his seat.

"The moment I stepped back into Singapore, I would probably be getting off the plane and into prison," Seow told me from his current home, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "Lee Kuan Yew is extremely clever. I was definitely a political prisoner; the attention of human-rights groups all over the world could be riveted on my case. But if he could shift it onto the criminal plane, tax evasion, he could say that it had nothing to do with human rights. They say I evaded paying my taxes, in that I submitted a false return. That is completely untrue."

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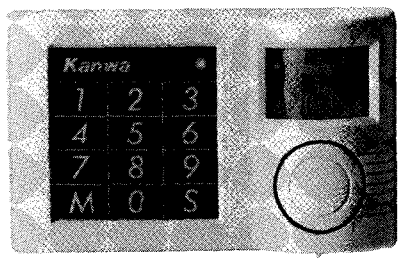

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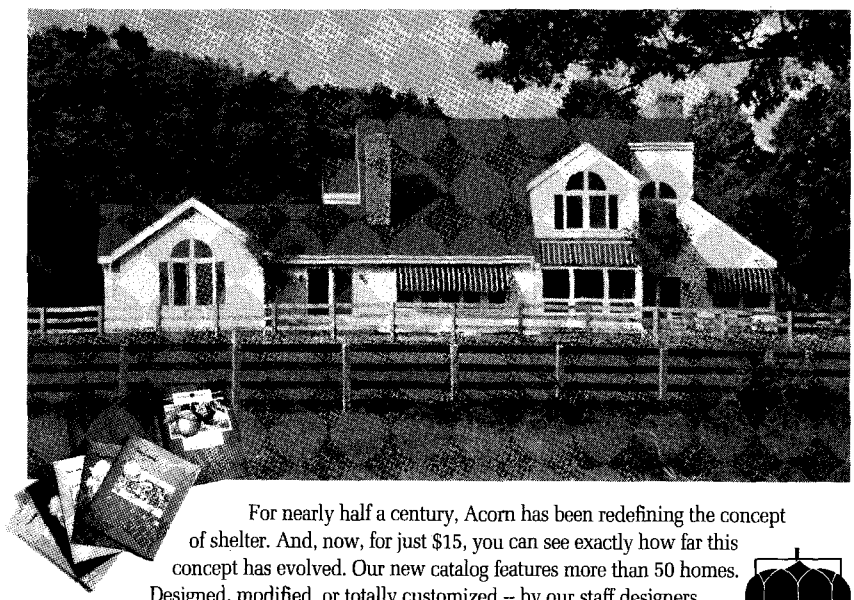

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tions as a result of its treatment of dissidents, hired private detectives to follow Seow in the United States for seven weeks, beginning in December of 1988. The *Straits Times* dutifully reported that Seow "travelled to Bloomington, Indiana, and stayed there over Christmas," and went on, "His stay there was confirmed by purchases of liquor, paid for with his American Express Gold Card. Seow moved on to Seattle on the West Coast of the U.S., five hours by air from Indiana. He was spotted at a house there and photographed sightseeing with 'an unknown Asian lady' in downtown Seattle." While no direct connection was ever proved, the month after Seow's arrest the *Asian Wall Street Journal* reported that the Banque National de Paris had abruptly cancelled a three-hundred-and-forty-seven-thousand-dollar line of credit to a Malaysian businesswoman in Singapore whom Seow had been engaged to. Ashleigh Seow, Francis Seow's son and the secretary of one of Singapore's town councils, told me that the woman, a permanent resident of Singapore, was given two weeks to leave the country and never told the reason. "I was there when they served the documents on her," he said.

As for the Hendrickson expulsion, Singapore's government directed a torrent of abuse at the United States in announcing it. Reminiscent of the old *Pravda*, the *Straits Times* reported, on May 11, 1988, the number of demonstrators at a protest rally before the rally had taken place. "More than 4,000 unionists and workers are staging a protest rally today to show their anger at American interference in Singapore's domestic policies," the paper, which comes out before dawn, said. On May 31st, Goh Chok Tong, who was then deputy prime minister, told Parliament that "the American Constitution—and here I am quoting one Dr. Freeman Dyson—'The American Constitution is designed to be operated by crooks, just as the British constitution is designed to be operated by gentlemen.'" Britain's *Financial Times* wrote of the controversy, "The fracas between tiny Singapore and the mighty U.S. looks set to go down as one of the more improbable, even bizarre, diplomatic clashes. . . . All this is directed against a country which absorbs a quarter of Singapore's total exports, provides about a third of its foreign investment and whose companies are among the biggest private-sector employers on the island. In addition, it is a country whose defence role in the region Singapore strongly supports."

Did the Singapore government lose all sense of reality in 1987 and 1988, finding itself so embarrassed by bad publicity over the arrest of the twenty-two activists that it kept digging a deeper hole for itself in an effort to get out? I asked Lee Kuan Yew about these events, and about why he appeared in general so contemptuous of the concept of human rights. Lee's answers seem rooted in an era when many countries saw a monolithic Communist conspiracy poised to take over at any sign of weakness, but his words were delivered with such passion and such determination that they also began to resemble something else: to me they sounded for all the world like a father talking about protecting the chastity of his daughter. The only problem, of course, is that in this instance the daughter has by now turned thirty-two.

"We did not arrest them because they were church people," Lee began. "We have a professional organization called the Internal Security Department. Its job is to make sure that the subversion of the Communist Party of Malaya does not swing into the English-educated world. This particular man, Vincent Cheng, tried to use the church as his cover." The activists, Lee said, were trying to create unrest, which was a necessary precursor to the second stage, bombings and assassinations. "It makes no sense otherwise," he continued. "Because, first of all, they were no threat to us, right? None of the twenty-two were any threat to us politically. They were not known public figures. They couldn't have beaten us in any election. You do this, you're bound to have a public reaction which must be adverse, because it comes out of the blue. So why do you want to undertake something with adverse electoral consequences a year before the elections, when these people were no threat to us in the coming elections? Ask yourself that. The Western press spoke as if we were in danger of losing our seats and our majority. But we knew we were in no danger at all, either before or after the action. I told the younger ministers, 'Look, as I see it, this takes about five years before it gets going. You can wait for it to mature and you might find out the ramifications. But you'll run the risk of many more innocent people being drawn in.'"

I also asked Lee about Chia Thye Poh—how a man so modest and considerate could be seen as a threat. As I described Chia's qualities, Lee interrupted, saying, "Chinese Communist style. That is the ideal Communist. You must be humble, you must be very frugal and Spartan, not flashy, not trying to awe or impress people. They impress people by their humility and self-sacrificing manner, a certain exaggerated understatement of themselves, but a steely determination."

While many leaders around the world violate human rights, few won't at least pay lip service to them in interviews with Western correspondents. Paying lip service, however, is not Lee Kuan Yew's style. "I'm not sure human rights are a traditional value, even in Christian societies," he told me. "It's the answer of the West in countering Communism. Democracy countered Communism by sponsoring what has been advanced as the axiomatic truths of free society, which includes freedom of the press and human rights. But are they universal values? Can you prove their universality? If they are in fact of universal relevance, will they not win just by a process of Darwinian evolution?"

EVEN as Lee Kuan Yew continues to fear a Communist conspiracy, the tattered remains of Asian Communist Parties are looking to Singapore as a model of how to maintain tight control over a nation's government and over its people's lives while simultaneously quelling discontent by freeing its economy. Academicians in China have named the movement "neo-authoritarianism"—a system that allows the leaders to keep their Party firmly in power yet preside over a booming economy. In his study of Singapore, Russell Heng, the Singaporean researcher, speculates that neo-authoritarianism could emerge as the next ideological challenge to democratic capitalism. The leaders of Vietnam are already speaking openly of their admiration for Singapore, but their ardor might cool when they discover that a major component of Singapore's success is the absence of corruption.

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STALEMATES

In Singapore, the People's Action Party serves as the basic vehicle for control. Formed in 1954, at a time when Lee Kuan Yew was in alliance with local Communists, the P.A.P. still bears a striking resemblance to Communist Parties in its structure. Lee no doubt saw that Communist Parties were organized to promote tight discipline and control, two qualities he values, and he has never hesitated to borrow attractive ideas no matter what their source. Accordingly, the P.A.P.'s members have no role in choosing the Party leaders or the candidates for Parliament. Instead, Lee screens the members carefully and selects from them several hundred "cadres"—their exact number and their names are secret. The cadres, in turn, elect a twelve-member central Executive Committee. "In the past," the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in 1990, "Lee has unapologetically compared the system to that of the Roman Catholic Church, where 'the Pope appoints the cardinals and the cardinals then elect the Pope.' Others have described the cadre-based system as 'Leninist.' Ironically, it was actually imposed on the party by Lee in 1957 against the strenuous objections of the party's left, on the grounds that it would provide an iron curtain to prevent the PAP from being infiltrated by Communists." In remaining secretary-general of the P.A.P. after giving up the Prime Ministership to Goh Chok Tong, Lee still holds the ultimate reins of power. "Goh is perhaps the only head of state in the world who doesn't control his political party," a European diplomat in Singapore noted recently.

Singapore has the trappings of a democracy: its people elect a Parliament, and opposition candidates are free to contest any seat. It is even possible that if the P.A.P. imposed disastrous policies on Singapore—and at the same time chose not to tamper with the electoral system—the opposition could win control. But the opposition has a long way to go. From 1966, when the Barisan Sosialis delegates walked out, until 1981, when Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam won a seat for the Workers' Party, Parliament did not have a single opposition member, and in the nineteen-eighties there were never more than two full-voting opposition members. The most recent election took place this past August, and although the opposition parties did better than at any time since 1963, the P.A.P. still retained all but four of the eighty-one seats.

Jeyaretnam, who was born in Sri Lanka, is the only opposition figure in Singapore with almost as forceful a presence as Lee himself. Like Lee, he trained for the law in Britain, and his command of the Queen's English is impeccable. When I called on Jeyaretnam in his office, a cramped space he shares with a secretary, and he spoke about what he believes are the injustices in Singapore's society, his powerful voice resounded mightily. Although Jeyaretnam was the lone representative of the opposition in Parliament, the government launched an extraordinary series of actions against him. "Until I got elected in 1981, the P.A.P. was paying lip service to some kind of opposition in Parliament," Jeyaretnam told me. "The moment I got into Parliament, the members were completely stunned, though this was the sixth election in which I had contested a seat. Often, when I asked a question in Parliament, they said I was abusing my privileges. I had to go before the Committee on Privileges four times, accused of making improper allegations against the government. Outside Parliament, the P.A.P. began a systematic campaign to isolate me."

In 1984, Jeyaretnam was accused by the government of misusing Workers' Party funds, and the case went to trial. He was acquitted on three counts and fined a thousand Singapore dollars on a fourth. Under the law, it would have taken a fine of twice that amount to deprive him of his seat in Parliament. Seven months later, the judge who presided over his case was transferred out of the courts and into the Attorney General's office. The government then appealed the case, and in 1986 the appeals court fined Jeyaretnam the necessary two thousand dollars, disbarred him, and sentenced him to a month in jail. Jeyaretnam had the right to appeal his disbarment, although not the conviction itself, to the Privy Council in England, the highest court in the Commonwealth, and he did so. In 1988, the Privy Council delivered a sharply worded verdict restoring Jeyaretnam to the practice of law. The Privy Council Law Lords declared that Jeyaretnam and a co-defendant from the Workers' Party "have suffered a grievous injustice," and went on, "They have been fined, imprisoned, and publicly disgraced for offenses of which they were not guilty." The Singapore government then abolished the right of appeal to the Privy Council in such cases. But this still wasn't the end of the story. Lee sued Jeyaretnam for libel and, in 1990, won vast damages, which forced Jeyaretnam to put his house up for sale. "Lee won't let you go," Jeyaretnam told me. "He said several times in Parliament that I had to be destroyed."

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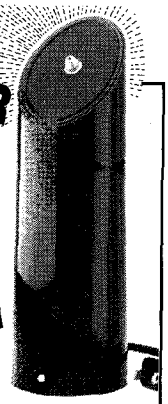

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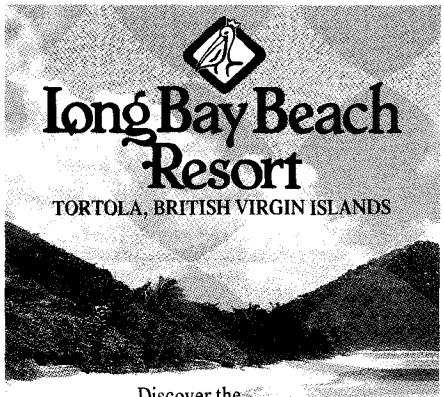

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attention accorded to Jeyaretnam, his experience does illustrate the perils of being in the political opposition in Singapore. On a subtler level, political opponents face a number of potential obstacles. Even when the government does nothing, opposition candidates can experience substantial setbacks to their careers; for instance, many Singaporeans are unlikely to relish the idea of being represented in court by a lawyer identified with the opposition. "Whether you're a lawyer or an architect or a businessman, your clients want you to get things done," one Singapore professional told me. "A few remarks from the government, and they'll go away. We have a very cautious public, having grown up in these conditions." Opposition candidates have complained about restrictions on their rallies, and about distortion of their views in the government-controlled press. Because trade unions and universities are dominated by the government, they're unlikely to serve as fertile breeding grounds for opposition parties.

In part because of gerrymandering, the percentage of seats in Parliament won by the opposition bears no relation to the percentage of votes it gets. In August's election, for instance, the opposition parties took almost forty per cent of the vote but won only four of the eighty-one seats. "The PAP has succeeded in preventing this opposition vote from translating into a comparable percentage of seats in Parliament through such techniques as . . . changing the constitutional ground rules at will and combining constituencies and redrawing electoral boundaries for the benefit of the ruling party," the New York City Bar Association report stated. "Following the 1988 general elections, the government imposed percentage limitations on the number of minorities who can live in particular housing complexes. . . . The Singapore government has started to impose quotas on each apartment block and on each neighborhood."

Thus, Singapore is effectively a one-party state, with the ruling party organized on the cadre system. The government has weakened religious institutions, dominated the press, and introduced pervasive censorship. It owns many major businesses and controls the one big labor union. If this has a familiar ring, it is because these conditions—despite the fervent anti-Communism of Lee Kuan Yew—are indistinguishable from those normally identified with a Communist state. Universal employment, good housing for everyone, and the absence of poverty are also part of the Communist rhetoric, the only difference being that in Singapore they have become reality. The analogy can obviously be carried too far—no Communist nation would turn to multinational corporations for investment capital, for example. But it raises a fascinating question: Did Communism die because of its inherent deficiencies or because its governments were too corrupt and too incompetent—because there were no Lee Kuan Yews?

HIDDEN away on the third floor of the Tanglin Shopping Center, in the Orchard Road tourist area, is a little store called D & O Film & Video. Here, Albert Odell holds court, to talk about movies the way a football fan might talk about the greatest Superbowls. Odell, once British and now a Singaporean, came from Hong Kong in 1948 to represent film companies that wanted to distribute their movies in Southeast Asia. Today, he runs his video store in conjunction with a silent partner—the government's Board of Film Censors, which has the first crack at all videotapes that enter Singapore legally. "I get a parcel every week, but it's delivered directly to the censors," he told me. "I open it in their presence. The censors have a yardstick to go by: certain words are one hundred per cent taboo. They allow 'fuck' but never 'motherfucker.' If 'mother' is involved, it goes. Any frontal bare breast is out, but a side view is O.K. All references to Allah go. In 'Young Guns,' a guy might be shot twelve times, and they'll say, 'Reduce it so he's shot only five times.' " Singapore's officials are nothing if not methodical, and they duly type up on a sheet of paper every excision and alteration they require in a film. ("Reduce to minimum the sequence of couple embracing passionately and woman in ecstasy," one alteration reads.) Odell tapes the relevant sheet to the inside of each videocassette box, so the customer can know exactly what is missing. Browsing through the shelves of D & O Film & Video becomes an exercise in X-rated hilarity.

Singapore imposes censorship not only on movies but also on books, magazines, and music. The United

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States Information Service can't show a film on America before submitting it to the censors. Old Beatles favorites such as "Yellow Submarine" are forbidden, and so are some of the albums by the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Elton John, often because song lyrics contain a reference to drugs. All jukeboxes were banned, as a symbol of moral decay, until July of 1991, when the government relented and licensed one for the Hotel Asia. Censorship can be the result of whim as well as of policy. I was so curious about the banning of *Cosmopolitan* that I put the question to Lee. "I agree with you," he answered, "*Cosmopolitan* is not likely to degrade or beguile young minds. But I have in my midst ministers younger than I who are fervent Christians, who believe that their daughters should not be reading all this. And one of them was in charge of information and the press, and he decided to ban *Cosmopolitan*." In this communications hub of southern Asia, Cable News Network can be seen only when the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation chooses to broadcast CNN news, because satellite-reception dishes are illegal. "You can get CNN in Saigon, you can get it in Beijing, but you can't get it here," one diplomat complains. When the American Embassy applied for a satellite dish, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, it took the Singapore government two years to grant the application, and then only on the proviso that no Singaporeans—not even employees of the Embassy—be allowed to look at programs from it. The Embassy is also forbidden to invite Singaporeans to watch American election returns on television.

The government is most careful to keep out anything that might offend Muslims. Because of the tensions between Malay Muslims and the Chinese during the time of the Malaysian Federation, and because Indonesia, a mostly Muslim country, slaughtered tens of thousands of its Chinese minority in 1965, Singapore bends over backward to avoid inciting either its own Malay population or its Muslim neighbors. (In 1965, Lee Kuan Yew said of Indonesia, "They live in a tenement area and they want to come into my little suburban house with its fruit trees.") Until recently, every Malay Singaporean going to college had his full tuition paid by the government, no matter how wealthy his family was; there was no such policy for Chinese or Indians. Several government officials I talked with deplored the fact that Malays don't take as instinctively as Chinese to the pursuit of money, because the result is a Malay underclass in Singapore that, it is feared, could explode at any provocation. "A children's book published in India about the founder of the Sikh religion was banned because he had criticized Islam," a bookseller told me. "We had an art book of Persian miniatures, and one was a picture of Muhammad as a young prince. I had to ink out the face, because Muhammad isn't supposed to be depicted. I got a book on geometric designs in Islamic mosques, and even that had to be submitted to the censors." The government's fear of its Malay minority may be tinged with paranoia. Although Singaporean Malays on average earn less than the Chinese, most still have a substantial stake in the system and have come to be far better off than their counterparts in Malaysia. A young Malay guide from the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, who showed me the sights of Singapore, told me the story of her family. In the early nineteen-seventies, the family of ten lived in a squatters' zinc-roofed one-room hut, without even a toilet. The roof leaked, she said, and also made the room an oven during the day. Now they reside in a four-bedroom apartment. All her sisters and brothers have good professional jobs, and two of her brothers, who are married, live in five-room apartments.

The workings of censorship can be subtle. The regulations call for all books to be submitted to the censor, but because this procedure can take months for each title the booksellers generally engage in self-censorship, ordering only books that they know are safe, and not bothering to submit them. "A couple of years ago, some young people started an arts magazine," a man active in the arts community told me. "No bookstore would sell it, and it died." In 1986, a critical biography of Lee Kuan Yew was published in Australia. Called "No Man Is an Island," it was written by James Minchin, an Anglican priest who had worked in Singapore. The censors didn't ban the book; they rejected it because the cover carried aerial views of Singapore labelled "Courtesy of Ministry of Communications and Information." That, the censors said, implied government endorsement of the book. The 1990 edition of the book dropped the photos, but no bookseller has dared sell it anyway, since a bookseller as well as a book's author and publisher can be subject to a libel suit by Lee. The same holds true for a second critical biography of Lee, written by T. S. Selvan and called "Singapore: The Ultimate Island," which was published in Australia in 1990. I bought both books in Johore Bahru, the Malaysian city across the causeway from Singapore, where merchants do a booming business in banned books and uncensored videotapes. In my second interview with Lee, I took the books from my briefcase and asked him why Singaporeans couldn't be trusted to read them. It was the only time Lee lost his composure. Of "The Ultimate Island" he said, "And this one I don't even know. . . . It's just rubbish. It's not even a well-written or well-researched book. It's just rubbish. I don't even know of the book." He added, "Anybody can write anything they like about me, but they run the risk of defaming me and ending up paying me damages. That's my counterweapon."

The book industry is a paragon of freedom compared with the country's newspapers. All the newspapers are published by a company called Singapore Press Holdings, and anyone who wants to own more than three per cent of its stock must seek approval from the Minister of Communications and the Arts; the minister also has veto power over the directors. Government-owned companies and agencies are among the largest stockholders in Singapore Press Holdings, and its current chairman is in addition the chairman of the Port of Singapore Authority, a government agency. Anyone who reads the *Straits Times* might wonder why all this corporate control is necessary, since direct pressure from government officials is never needed. The *Straits Times* operates with a subservience that irritates even some supporters of the government. Day after day, the paper devotes much of its front page to the latest pronouncements of top officials. One day during my stay, for instance, a five-column headline over the lead story read "PM: LET'S MAKE THIS THE

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FINEST NATION," and the article began, "Mr. Goh Chok Tong last night issued an open invitation to all Singaporeans to help build this country into the finest in the world by the end of this century." A Western diplomat who had previously been stationed in Beijing told me, "Reading the *Straits Times* is like reading the *People's Daily*. Basically, the government doesn't like anything it can't control."

Unlike most other countries with a controlled press, Singapore attempts to keep the foreign press in line, too. For several years, beginning in 1985, it fought a running battle with Dow Jones & Co., after taking offense at articles in two of the company's publications, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Among other things, Lee twice initiated proceedings against the *Asian Journal* for criminal contempt of court, filed libel actions against each publication, and ordered that the Singapore circulation of each be cut back drastically. When the *Review* responded by ending all circulation in Singapore, the government licensed a local printer to publish pirated copies of the magazine, minus the advertisements, each week, for sale in Singapore. In September of 1989, the *Review* wasn't allowed to send a reporter to cover its own libel trial. The next year, Lee, rejecting a request from Secretary of State James Baker, refused to let either publication cover Baker's visit to Singapore. The controversy neared resolution in 1991, however, with each side taking conciliatory steps toward settling the legal battles.

The government has also used circulation restrictions as a weapon against other foreign publications, and in 1990 it enacted harsh regulations applicable to foreign newspapers and magazines that sell copies in Singapore. "The clear intent of the Government was to warn all foreign periodicals that now circulate in Singapore to be wary of their reporting on Singapore lest they cross the vaguely drawn line of 'interfering' in Singapore's 'domestic affairs,' thereby making themselves subject to the restrictions of the Act," the State Department human-rights report stated.

Never one to hide from his enemies, Lee went to Hong Kong in 1990 and addressed two international press groups; his remarks only strengthened his reputation for combativeness. He blamed television for the deaths in Tiananmen Square, saying that it was television coverage of demonstrations in the Philippines and South Korea, rather than a desire for freedom, which had spurred the Chinese students' protest. And he predicted that the Western press now centered in Hong Kong would gratefully flee to Singapore in 1997 and work under its rules. Derek Davies, the former editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, who is now a columnist for it, wrote that Lee "had the gall to suggest that, come 1997, Singapore would offer the most congenial perch from which Western correspondents could cover Asia. He appeared to be serious. Presumably he believes that, by 1997, the entire 'foreign' press will have been bullied into the pathetic state of the media in Singapore."

Lee clearly takes delight in his battles against his critics. When I asked him how many people he had sued for libel, he replied, "I think about thirteen. Thirteen men in thirty years. Not bad. I haven't lost any of them. I fought only four in court; the others decided to settle. In other words, they withdrew and apologized and paid for my costs and paid a sum of money to charity. A political point was made." Still, the confrontations with the media raise a question: Why should a prosperous country with no government corruption to hide—a nation that seeks to be the communications hub of its region—act so forcefully against the press, against what appears to be its own best interests? The most plausible answer is that Lee Kuan Yew doesn't like what he can't control—and that he sees the independent forces in Singapore today as fuelling the potential for destabilization in the future. Censorship in a nation that wants to be a major participant in the world-communications revolution might appear to be a contradiction, but Lee has shown in the past that he can successfully counter a well-known adage: that he can eat his cake and have it, too.

Nothing seems beyond the scope of the government's manipulation. "They recently had a campaign against obesity," a diplomat told me. "Cherubic kids are prized by Chinese society, but the Singapore government likes them lean and mean." Unlike most other offenses, being overweight is not subject to a fine, but the government did rule that obese recruits will have to undergo five months of basic military training, as opposed to three months for fit recruits. (All males have to serve at least two years in the armed forces.) Over all, however, few campaigns have raised as many hackles as a government effort to get college graduates to marry each other and breed. Government ministers don't shy away from the word "eugenics," despite its negative connotations since the Nazi era. Lee, who initiated the campaign, in 1983, once pointed to statistics showing that women with little education have twice as many

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babies as college graduates, and told the nation in a speech, "If we continue to reproduce ourselves in this lopsided way, we will be unable to maintain present standards. . . . Our economy will falter; administration will suffer, and our society will decline."

Singapore's educational system is intensive, and pupils are subjected to pressure from an early age. One Singaporean banker I interviewed said, "Everyone has private tutors for his children, and it sometimes starts at two or three years old," and he added, "My daughter at age three and a half came home from nursery school and asked, 'Why am I not studying with a private tutor? Everyone else is doing it.' It's hard here to enjoy childhood." By the time a woman graduates from a university, being a housewife holds little appeal for her. But housewives are what many male Singaporean graduates want. Influenced by a Chinese cultural tradition that relegates wives to the home, they shy away from educated women. If present trends continue, the government estimates, two out of five female graduates will still be unmarried at age forty. Foreign men who work in Singapore find a bonanza: the city is filled with attractive, accomplished unmarried women. For the government, however, this situation is a potential crisis.

That's where the Social Development Unit, which is nothing less than an official government matchmaking service, comes in. Only college graduates are eligible; they fill out personal-data forms, and a computer then provides the names of potential partners. "In our culture, there are no singles bars, and it's hard to meet people socially," Ang Wai Hoong, the S.D.U.'s director, told me. "Girls read these lovely romantic novels, and our guys are practical-minded technocrats. So when the two get together it's a mismatch." The S.D.U. sponsors lectures on how to date women, along with a variety of other activities, including evening cruises to nowhere that are dubbed "love boats." Then, when the matchmaking succeeds (two hundred and fifty-three S.D.U. members were matched into matrimony in 1990), the newlyweds are bombarded with a variety of government incentives to have children. The incentives openly rely on the concepts of eugenics. If a working mother has performed at a certain level in tests given to all students in the

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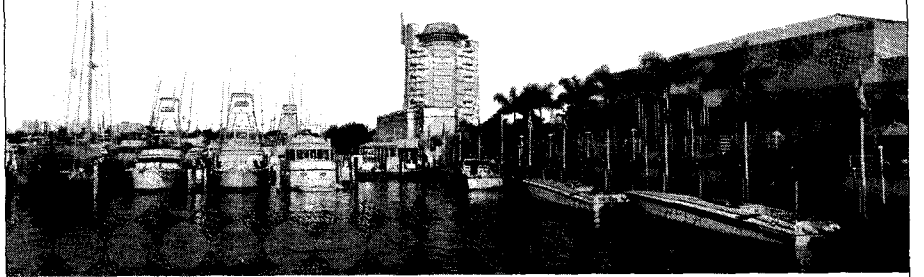

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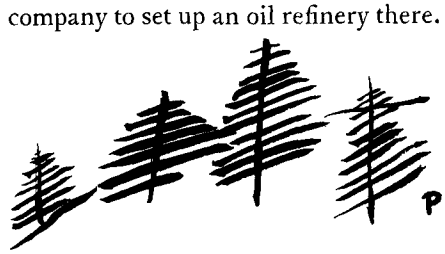
tenth grade, for instance, she can deduct from her taxes a percentage of her income for each child; the more children she has, the higher the percentage grows. On the other side of the coin, the government instituted a so-called Sterilization Cash Incentive Scheme in 1984 but later abandoned it, along with several other eugenics-inspired schemes. Under this one, low-income families, if neither husband nor wife completed high school, could get five thousand dollars toward the purchase of an apartment if the wife agreed to be sterilized.

Many female graduates in Singapore, being more interested in a career than in having children, express resentment at being looked upon by their government as high-quality breeding stock. The government's social-engineering schemes have also alienated many Malays and Indians. Now that the Chinese language and Chinese culture are no longer identified with leftist politics, Lee Kuan Yew has been pushing for the adoption of Confucian values, and for the speaking of Mandarin along with English, as a counterweight to what he considers the decadence of the West—a decadence he sees spreading in Singapore because of its economic ties. (This isn't entirely paranoia. At one of the more popular McDonald's, for example, large groups of Chinese and Malays in their twenties, financed by indulgent parents, sit at outdoor tables all night long, talking and smoking pack after pack of cigarettes. Cigarettes have become a form of protest for rebellious young people, since smoking is the one activity the government tries to stamp out that nevertheless remains legal.) Lee told me that he was encouraging Confucianism "to insure that certain basic core values which held a society together are not lost." Confucianism is also a philosophy that is ideally suited to Singapore, since it teaches absolute obedience to the state and its rulers. But Malays and Indians look upon Confucianism, and upon the periodic campaigns urging the speaking of Mandarin, as dangerous moves, which could force them out of the mainstream of Singaporean society. Not all Chinese favor these things, either. "Children are taking all their cultural cues from the U.S., but only at a superficial level, like Michael Jackson and Ninja Turtles," a wealthy Chinese industrialist told me. "My children wouldn't speak a word of Mandarin unless someone forced them. We don't want to become like A.B.C.s—American-born Chinese—but will Mandarin be increasingly required for the civil service and business? With the population three-quarters Chinese, the minorities feel justifiably threatened."

When the government uses its authoritarian powers for mainstream causes, like environmental improvement, the results would make any planner in the West envious. Singapore, like many cities around the world, has been threatened with slow strangulation by the increased use of cars. But, unlike the other cities, the government of Singapore can dictate stringent restrictions on car ownership and get away with it. Because of government taxes, cars cost two or three times as much as the same models do in the United States. (The cost drops substantially if you agree to use the car only on nights and weekends.) There is a quota on the number of new cars allowed, and the government holds a monthly auction of rights to buy these cars. The annual road tax ranges from a few hundred dollars to well over a thousand, depending on the size of the car. The owner pays extra for the right to drive into the central business district during rush hours, and soon sensors will be embedded in the roads so that the owner can be billed for other rush-hour driving, such as driving on freeways. Combined with excellent public transportation, the result is clean air and few traffic jams.

Even in the earliest days of Singapore's development, Lee insisted on environmental controls for industry. When I asked him what he considered the biggest mistakes he had made as Prime Minister, he didn't mention the collapse of the Malaysian Federation first. Instead, he told me about "a beautiful patch of green right in the middle of our harbor called Keppel, which had a golf course," and he went on, "But we were so desperate to get our industrialization going that I was persuaded by my colleague the Minister for Finance to allow a Japanese company to set up an oil refinery there. It was a fire hazard and a blight on the landscape. And now they've sold out, because they lost money."



HIGH government officials in Singapore not only get salaries commensurate with those of corporation executives but also occupy offices luxurious enough to resemble the finest corporate suites. Even by that standard, the office of the Minister of Trade and Industry is something special: it is huge, with tasteful high-tech décor, and is situated on the top floor of the Treasury Building, with a commanding view of the harbor. Its occupant is Lee Hsien Loong, who is often known as B. G. Lee, because he held the rank of brigadier general when he left the Army, at age thirty-one. Besides being the Minister of Trade and Industry, B. G. Lee, at thirty-nine, is Deputy Prime Minister and the heir apparent to Goh Chok Tong. He is also the son of Lee Kuan Yew.

B. G. Lee dismisses the relationship as unimportant. "After a while, they're not interested in who your father is but in what you're doing," he told me. Lee Kuan Yew hasn't got off so easily: his critics frequently question why the son of the Prime Minister rose so rapidly in what is supposed to be a meritocracy. After meeting B. G. Lee, however, it becomes impossible to attribute his status merely to nepotism. A graduate of Cambridge and Harvard, fluent in Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia—the language of Malaysia—and formidable in his native English, he is a powerful intellect and a master of words; every off-the-cuff remark he makes is phrased as if a speechwriter had taken days to polish it. Unlike his father, he wears a suit and is smooth in manner, betraying none of his emotions in his face. During my interview, he laughed heartily after every answer. Although in Asia laughter is often a sign of being ill at ease, he appeared so supremely confident that I began to wonder whether he was instead laughing with pleasure at the brilliance of his response.

Like his father, Lee Hsien Loong takes a hard line toward the governing of Singapore. He sees no need for a relaxation of censorship. "If we took a poll of the population, there would not be a dramatic change in censorship standards," he said. "Do we want to have Washington, D.C.,'s Thirteenth Street in Singapore? Most Singaporeans would say no." (Few Singaporeans are

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as worldly as their Deputy Prime Minister, so in reality a reference to Washington's center of sleaze would draw only a blank stare.) Nor does he feel that the foreign press should report on Singapore as it sees fit. "We start with the proposition that Singaporeans have to be masters of their own households, and foreigners are guests," he said. "Does it hurt us? Banks grow at the rate of fifteen per cent a year, multinationals come in. I don't think it hurts our reputation to have taken on Dow Jones and not to have been bested by them." On the question of demonstrations—even relatively innocuous ones, such as those by students protesting tuition increases—Lee was firm. "It would be a sad thing if we had to solve our problems this way," he said. "I don't think a demonstration in this part of the world would be like a camp-out on the Mall in Washington. Our answer is this: We fully concede we're not like America."

Also like his father, Lee can be tough. When he came to Washington in 1989 to speak to the Asia Society, a business group, he used the occasion to attack America's human-rights policy, saying that the United States should continue to defend Southeast Asia but keep out of its internal affairs. He said that it "puzzles us that U.S. human-rights groups and government officials should so confidently prescribe for us, as a panacea for progress and stability, U.S.-style press freedoms and 'human rights.' Can the Singapore government really be so benighted and wrongheaded as not to see what is so patently in Singapore's interests? . . . Speaking English does not make us an Anglo-Saxon people, much less make us Americans. . . . We are not a Western society, and have never sought to become one." When I remarked to Lee that it must have taken courage to make such a speech in Washington, he replied, "The audience wasn't hostile. Businesspeople don't mind having liberals shot at."

The contrast between B. G. Lee and Goh Chok Tong is dramatic. Goh's father died when he was ten, and the family survived on his mother's earnings as a schoolteacher. He grew up speaking the Fukien dialect at home, and although he got a master's degree in economics at Williams College, his English is no better than adequate, and on occasion it is difficult for a Westerner to follow, because it has a Singaporean lilt. A friend's father "was amazed that I should choose to make a living as a politician," Goh once said, adding, "Fortunately, this is Singapore, and our people place greater value on substance and results than on the gift of gab." Goh—who, like Lee Kuan Yew, often dresses informally—is tall and thin, sits ramrod straight, and was visibly nervous during my interview. Especially in contrast to the self-assurance of the two Lees, Goh's awkwardness makes him seem refreshingly human, and Singaporeans appear to be fond of him. But Goh, too, can be tough. He played a major role in the arrest of the church workers and in the battle with Dow Jones, and in 1990 he told a public gathering, "If people behave in a manner that will threaten the wider interests of Singapore, they will feel the firm smack of the government."

Few people would envy Goh his position. On one side is Lee Kuan Yew, who heads the P.A.P., takes an active role in running the government, and, in 1988, told Singaporeans, "Even from my sickbed, even if you are going to lower me into the grave, and I feel that something is going wrong, I'll get up." On the other side is Lee Hsien Loong, who openly aspires to Goh's position. "If I can do the job, I want to be Prime Minister someday," he told me. I asked Goh how he survived, sandwiched between two such forceful personalities, one of whom threatens to come back from the grave if necessary. "Well, I think that's because I'm relaxed," he replied. "I'm not wearing Lee Kuan Yew's shoes. I'm wearing my own shoes, which are much smaller than his. I think that B. G. Lee is in many ways like his father. But he knows that to govern Singapore you want a team that can work for Singapore. So he's very supportive as No. 2." Goh calls Lee Hsien Loong "an obvious successor."

Goh became Prime Minister in November of 1990, offering the prospect of a changed Singapore. With the release of Vincent Cheng and Teo Soh Lung a few months before, Singapore was down to its last political prisoner, Chia Thye Poh, and he is now a part-time prisoner at that. Goh has filled his speeches with references to making Singapore a more enjoyable, less restrictive place to live, and has pledged that the government will move toward

"Life is something to be spent, not to be saved."

–D.H. Lawrence

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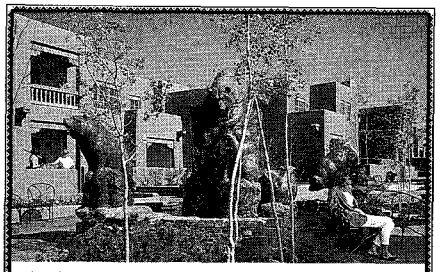

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a less paternalistic role. He has told Parliament that "the society which we want to bring about will be more refined, more compassionate, kinder and gentler, to borrow President Bush's words," and added that "there will be greater freedom for Singaporeans to make their own choices and to express themselves." Then, last August, he called a snap parliamentary election for the final day of the month—two years earlier than was required by law. Goh said that he was making the election a test of his plans for liberalization, and that if he didn't get sufficient support "we can all go back to authoritarian government." For once, Singapore's opposition, so often cowed and ineffective, came up with a brilliant strategy. Its architect was Chiam See Tong, the only full-voting opposition member of Parliament and the leader of the Singapore Democratic Party, which, along with the Workers' Party, forms the bulk of the opposition; the two parties hold similar views, and stand to the left of the P.A.P. Chiam won his first election to Parliament in 1984; he told me that Lee Kuan Yew had campaigned against him then by pointing out that Chiam's opponent had got better test scores in high school. Chiam, a lawyer who is extremely meek and mild in manner, persuaded the Workers' Party to allow P.A.P. candidates to remain unopposed for forty-one of Parliament's seats, and so guarantee that, no matter what the size of the opposition vote, the P.A.P. would remain in power. Chiam sensed the mood of the electorate perfectly. Clearly, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the government's authoritarian, paternalistic policies, but many more voters would be tempted to express that dissatisfaction if they could be absolutely certain that they wouldn't be throwing the P.A.P. out of office, and thereby imperilling the economic prosperity they hold so dear. The result was that the P.A.P. lost ground, its share of the vote dropping to sixty-one per cent from sixty-three per cent in 1988. The drop translated into only four seats, but it was still the opposition's biggest victory since 1963. And it put Lee and Goh in a real bind: Goh had wanted the vote to be a referendum on his plans for liberalization, but Chiam had turned it into the opposite. Many of those who voted against the P.A.P. were asking for more liberalization, not less.

What will happen now is far from clear. Goh said after the election that "life cannot go on as before," but he gave no hint of what he meant. Some students of the Singapore political scene speculated that Lee Kuan Yew would push Goh aside in favor of Lee Hsien Loong, who might quickly turn a kinder, gentler Singapore into a tougher, more brutal Singapore. Singaporean journalists I spoke with noted that the business community was trying to persuade Lee Kuan Yew that it didn't want a crackdown against the opposition—possibly the one move that could bring about the instability that Lee so fears.

If the hard-liners win out, can Singapore continue to survive as an anachronism—an economic power aligned with the West but resisting the democracy and freedom sweeping through the world? The tendency would be to answer no. The only problem with such an assessment is that when it comes to Singapore the doomsayers have yet to score a point. Lee Kuan Yew has proved them wrong on every possible occasion over the past twenty-five years.

The problem is the same for the other scenario, that of liberalization. Goh has done little more in his first year of office than to ease somewhat the censorship of movies. Jeyaretnam, the Workers' Party head, remarked that "nothing has changed in this administration except that men can now go see films in which women show their bodies." Goh's promises of greater freedom have been expressed only in generalities, and when I interviewed him in April I tried to press him on the particulars. I asked if he could name any issues on which he and Lee Kuan Yew disagreed. "Issues, no," he replied. "But maybe the style, the way of doing things." We discussed the rules and the fines for breaking them that are posted all over Singapore. "My own goal is for us to move into a position one day where we don't need to have all those fines put up," Goh said. "The rules would be there, but they would not be intruding into your consciousness every day. That means a newer generation must be put through schools, to be socially educated that this is the norm of behavior. I think it would require twenty or twenty-five years before we can move to that situation."

—Stan Sesser

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MUSICAL EVENTS

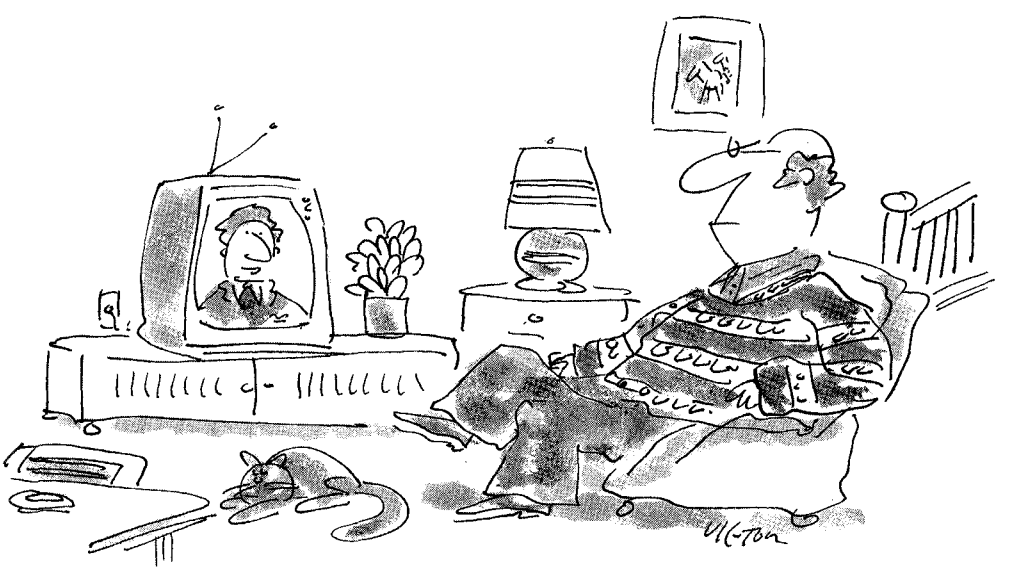
Exploring the Past

JOHN CORIGLIANO'S first opera, "The Ghosts of Versailles," was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera nearly thirteen years ago, and had its first performance on December 19th. This was the twenty-sixth première in the company's hundred-and-eight-year history, and its first in a quarter century. (The previous new opera, Marvin David Levy's "Mourning Becomes Electra," was done in March, 1967.) The work is described as "A Grand Opera Buffa in Two Acts," suggested by Beaumarchais's "La Mère Coupable." It was accorded a glittering presentation and was warmly received by the first-night public.

"La Mère Coupable," Beaumarchais's third Figaro play, gets a bad press from many but not from me. It is not a comedy but a daring essay in applying the mechanics of comedy intrigue to *pathétique* action. In a preface Beaumarchais described the matter as "the inner griefs, dividing many a family, for which divorce, efficacious in other circumstances, provides no remedy . . . wounds that only paternal sentiment, goodness of heart, and forgiveness can cure." In 1790, the Count and Countess Almaviva are living in Paris. Their heir, Léon, is "a youth seized by the spirit of Liberty, like all ardent, new souls." Figaro is "a man formed by the experience of the world and by events," and Suzanne has "shed the illusions of youth." Figaro, who outwitted Dr. Bartolo in "Le Barbier de Séville" and (helped by Suzanne and the Countess) outwitted the Count in "Le Mariage de Figaro," here outwits Bégearss, a villain intent on ruining the Almavivas. The drama ends with forgiveness, reconciliation, and the betrothal of Léon, who is revealed to be the son of the Countess and Cherubino, conceived while the Count was away governing Mexico, and the Count's ward Florestine, who is revealed to be his daughter by a Marquise Pizzarro. "La Mère Coupable" received its first performance in 1792, a few days after the first attack on the Tuileries; people had other things on their minds, and the play was a failure. It was revived with success five years later, and Beaumarchais took the first curtain call of his life, delighted, he said, by applause not from aristocrats, "the stupidest of whom thought himself superior" to a mere playwright, but from "citizens who recognized no superiority but that accorded to merit or to talent." He had worked for twenty years on the piece, he said. In the preface he called "Le Barbier" (1775) and "Le Mariage" (1784) preparations for it and suggested that the three plays, "the complete story of the Almaviva family," should be given on consecutive days: on the first day, we would laugh at the Count's turbulent youth, on the second merrily observe the faults of his manhood ("which are so often ours"), and on the third be persuaded that every man not born irredeemably wicked ends by being good, "when the age of passions has passed, and especially when he has tasted the sweet joy of fatherhood."

Paisiello's opera "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" appeared in 1782, and was played the world over until Rossini's "Barbiere," which appeared in 1816, supplanted it. Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" appeared in 1786, soon after "Le Mariage," and its final scene pointed toward the transfiguring reconciliations and forgiveness of "La Mère Coupable" (still in the future) more fully than Beaumarchais's "Mariage" finale: the composer achieved in advance that "Richardsonian" truth in the depiction of the human heart which Beaumarchais said was his aim in "La Mère Coupable." It is tempting to think that Beaumarchais heard Mozart's opera before writing his third play, but there is no evidence that he did; "Le Nozze" reached Paris only in 1793.

More than one composer considered the operatic possibilities of the third play. Grétry did, Benjamin Britten did, and Darius Milhaud composed a "Mère Coupable," which had its first performance in 1965, in Geneva. When Corigliano was approached by the Met about a work for the centenary season, 1983-84, he told James Levine that he wanted to write an opera buffa. Levine suggested that the house might be rather big. From their discussion the idea of a "grand opera buffa" was born—one that (in Corigliano's words) "could reach out in terms of tessitura, orchestration, and scope into the size of the hall." Corigliano asked the playwright William M. Hoffman to be his librettist, and in the Met program book Hoffman writes of the plan for "a *grand opera buffa*, combining the intimacy and wit of a Rossini comic opera with the large-scale vision and seriousness of a Wagner *Gesamtkunstwerk*." The collaborators chose "La Mère Coupable" as their subject but chose it without knowing the play, and they had second thoughts once they got to



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know it. In the current *Opera News* there is an interview with Hoffman. On being asked whether he and Corigliano "agreed to do the third Figaro play before you even read it," he replies:

> *That's right. I loved the idea so much, I* figured it was a great play like the other two. It isn't. . . . It's about the joys of marriage and fidelity, but really it's a terrible play. . . . There was no translation in existence. I finally did a working translation, and when John and I read it, our hearts sank. . . . It was the kind of play that we deliberately set out not to do. We were trying to get away from serious stuff. We wanted to do a buffa.

Eventually, elements of "La Mère Coupable" were adapted to become an opera-buffa-within-an-opera-seria—part of a new, original drama. "The Ghosts of Versailles" is a big piece. Its acts last about ninety and eighty minutes. It has twelve principal roles and thirty more named soloists, uses abundant choristers and supers, has both a stage orchestra and a pit orchestra. Act I was delivered in 1984. After sitting on it for nearly a year, the Met gave the collaborators a go-ahead. The score bears the closing date March, 1987.

LITTLE of "La Mère Coupable" survives in "The Ghosts of Versailles." The Almavivas, along with Susanna and Figaro, are in Paris; Florestine and Léon are in love; Bégearss plots against the family and is foiled. That's about all. Corigliano's opera opens in the theatre at Versailles, where the ghosts of Louis XVI and his court still linger. Beaumarchais proposes to entertain them with his new Figaro opera, set in 1793, after Louis's execution but before Marie Antoinette's. (Its composer is unmentioned; we must assume him to be Corigliano, successor to Paisiello, Mozart, and Rossini.) That's one donnée of the plot. The other is trickier. This Beaumarchais is in love with Marie Antoinette, and he claims that his new opera has the power to change history: "I'll make you live again. . . . The Revolution never happens! There is no guillotine! A new age dawns! Marie Antoinette lives!" (Seventeen ninety-three seems rather late to start undoing the Revolution; it may be that all Beaumarchais has in mind is effecting the Queen's escape from prison to a new life, with him, in Philadelphia, but this—like much else—remains unclear.) Although the Queen warns Beaumarchais that tampering with history may cost him his immortal soul, he persists. The means of procuring her freedom will be her diamond necklace, which he takes from her. His opera begins. We next see the necklace in Count Almaviva's hands. Figaro, disguised as a dancing girl, steals it from him as he is about to hand it to the British Ambassador; and in Act II Figaro departs from Beaumarchais's script and refuses to return the necklace if it is to be used to free Marie Antoinette. ("She's spoiled, arrogant, decadent. And a traitor to France. . . . She's a vampire, *she's a vulture. What do* I care if she loses her head?") The ghosts enter the opera-within-the-opera, and all the characters move into "history." Figaro witnesses the trial of Marie Antoinette and is stirred to pity for her. He gives up the necklace, but (this is confusing) hands it to Bégearss in an attempt to save Almaviva and his family from the Revolutionaries. The attempt fails; they are imprisoned; and in a comedy scene they escape. But Marie Antoinette refuses to leave, saying:

> She must stay
> And ride the cart. . . .
> She must stay,
> Beaumarchais,
> And she must die.

She mounts the guillotine. The chorus sings the "Marseillaise." The Almaviva party escapes from Paris in a hot-air balloon. And in the gardens of Aguas Frescas (according to the score) or in Paradise (according to the Met synopsis) the ghosts of Marie Antoinette and Beaumarchais find peace.

The real Beaumarchais was a colorful character: inventor, royal watchmaker, pamphleteer, playwright, scourge of the aristocracy, women's champion, hastener of the French Revolution (it has been claimed), fund-raiser for the American Revolution, secret agent in the royal service. ("Another expedition to England and Holland to seize a pamphlet attacking Marie Antoinette led to a series of incidents more amazing than the intrigues in Beaumarchais's own plays," the Britannica tells us.) The Countess's jewels play a part in "La Mère Coupable." The famous Affair of the Diamond Necklace did play an important (but quite different) part in Marie Antoinette's history. It is best to forget history while listening to "The Ghosts of Versailles" and approach the piece

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as a romp within a serio-sentimental frame: the unhappy Queen's inability, after two hundred years, to come to terms with her fate until, touched by Beaumarchais's love, she finds inner peace. Hoffman is no Hofmannsthal. The details of both the comedy and the romance could have been more finely, thoughtfully (and intelligibly) worked. The characters seem little more than puppets put through their paces to enact the elaborate plot. (Only Marie Antoinette becomes, at times, more than two-dimensional.) But I admired the ambition, ingenuity, and intricacy of the libretto, and its endeavor to combine, as Beaumarchais did, a drama of sentiment and a comedy of intrigue. In a program note Colin Graham, who directed "The Ghosts of Versailles," goes further:

> For all who have compassion for those caught in the difficulties and tragedies of today's way of life, who work in or enjoy the Arts and rightly regard them as a gift to enhance life and enrich the soul, the sub-text of this opera is of great significance: without concern for others, there can be no resolution of your own problems or desires; without forgiveness there is no being forgiven; without self-sacrifice there can be no salvation. . . .
>
> When Beaumarchais's love and sacrifice open Marie Antoinette's eyes to the truth, and to her love for him, she redeems not only herself, but all those caught with her in the darkness. This has been achieved, she realizes, not only through his self-sacrifice, but through his Art—Art which brings insight as well as laughter.

Mr. Graham considers the opera "an allegory for our time." Hoffman has called it "a serious exploration of that most current of events—revolution," suggesting that in the reconciliation of Queen Marie Antoinette and the revolutionary author of "Le Mariage" lies a symbolic "solution to the problems of revolution . . . combining the positive qualities of the old with the new."

THE other music of Corigliano that I have heard—concertos for piano, oboe, and clarinet, and (derived from the score for Ken Russell's film "Altered States") "Three Hallucinations"—left me with no strong impression of a powerful, individual creator. He is a composer fluent in many manners, one who knows what he likes and knows what the big public likes in the way of tunes and sounds. He plans carefully and scores deftly. There are three main kinds of music in "The Ghosts of Versailles." For the ghosts, there is "all-purpose modern," what one might call school of early Ligeti and middle Penderecki: chords sustained or slithering, clusters, rows busily crossing to produce washes of mysterious sound through which characters declaim in recitative, arioso, or plain speech. This is effects music, and it is effectively handled. (Corigliano aimed at an aural analogue of rising wisps of swirling smoke.) Beaumarchais's aria, the first musical number of Act II—his dream of a new age, which will be marked by the abolition of poverty and by free education, synthetic fabrics, solar heating, and vast theatres that "play our visions"—begins with ingenious rhythmic manipulations of a chromatic row, but it bogs down in slow-throbbing clusters. Some of the ghost scenes tend to drag.

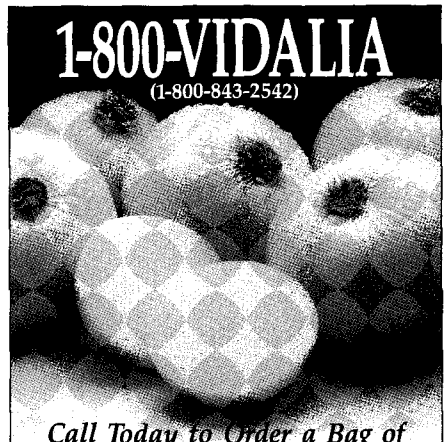
For the "Figaro" characters, there is pastiche and allusion, Mozartian or Rossinian. A quartet in Act I, for Cherubino and the Countess, joined by Marie Antoinette and Beaumarchais, has a refrain—

> Come now, my darling, come with me,
> Come to the room I have made for thee.
> Let us strew the bed with flowers,
> There we will spend the hours—

that begins with the first strain of "Voi che sapete" and continues with other pretty period tags. (They make up the opera's most memorable tune.) A duet in Act II for Susanna and the Countess—

> As summer brings a wistful breeze,
> Cooling houses, blowing trees . . .
>
> As autumn brings its windy chill
> And water freezes on the hill,
> Women love and hate their men,
> Wishing they were young again—

is spun over the accompaniment of the "Così Fan Tutte" trio "Soave sia il vento." Almaviva's palace band plays a minuet drawn from Figaro's "Se vuol ballare." Beaumarchais, furious when Figaro rewrites his lines, confronts him to the Statue music from "Don Giovanni." Corigliano's harmony tends to be more Victorian than Mozartian; he has a clever way of slipping from key to key. Figaro's entrance aria is a homage to Rossini's "Largo al factotum," but a rather lame one; presumably Corigliano wants to show us that Figaro has aged. In the first-act finale, the "Siete giallo . . . Sono giallo" exchanges of the "Barbiere" quintet are cited. There are other references. Bégearss's wildly melodramatic entrance aria, "Long live the



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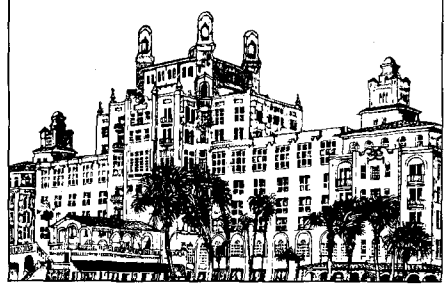

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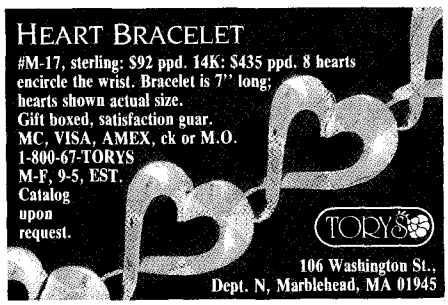

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worm" (its text suggested by Boito's "Re Orso"), blends strains from Handel, "Ruddigore," and Wagner. Marilyn Horne is accorded an eight-minute comedy spot (irrelevant to the plot) in which, with many a winding, wailing arabesque and with Sophie Tucker-like gusto and force, she parodies an Egyptian night-club singer:

> I am in a valley and you are in a valley.
> I have no she- or he-camel in it.
> In every house there is a cesspool.
> That's life.

In scenes where Figaro is chased by the company, a buoyant C-major 3/4 tune sails out over 2/4 accompaniment with Bernstein-like brio. Bégearss's second, dull aria, about rats, has origins in Corigliano's flute concerto "Pied Piper Fantasy"; the tangy, microtonal ghaita sound of the oboes in the first finale (set in the Turkish Embassy, where the British Ambassador is welcomed with a funny perversion of his national anthem) was also used in his Oboe Concerto.

The third kind of music is harder to describe. Associated at first with Marie Antoinette, it gradually becomes dominant as the ghosts, the Figaro characters, and history draw together into one action. Marie Antoinette's first aria, in the "ghost" style, has a lyrical refrain:

> *Once there was a golden bird*
> In a garden of silver trees.
> From the courtyard could be heard
> The laughter of women at their ease.

The melody is poised over an A pedal (A is the basic tonality of the opera), against which it pushes with sweet, poignant clashes suggesting the early Britten of, say, the Michelangelo Sonnets. As this manner develops, it becomes Straussian. In a quartet and a quintet of the second act, webs of slow imitative lines are twined over slow-moving harmonies. An orchestral interlude suggests an organist's dreamy improvisations. This music is not unattractive, but it is nostalgic, derivative, and often rather soupy. Corigliano alternates and combines the three kinds of music with skill.

IN a program essay Hoffman invites us to imagine a film repertory limited to a handful of classics and remakes of them:

> Have you seen Scorsese's "Gone"? His Burning of Atlanta is the greatest. . . . Scorsese? Are you kidding? Spike Lee's "Gone" is twenty times better. He had them burn downtown Atlanta for the Burning of Atlanta. . . . Streep's Scarlet is a post-feminist deconstruction of the oppressive old patriarchal stereotype. Resetting "Gone" in contemporary Moscow is a masterstroke.

Things have not reached quite that point in the opera world, though sometimes they seem to be moving that way. It was good to see the Met, the most conservative of the major companies, having a popular triumph with, at last, a new opera. To be sure, it was not a very *big* adventure except in scale and, no doubt, cost. The libretto was high-minded; the idea of a "grand opera buffa" in English was new; but much of the music trod old, tried paths. It was unchallenging, uncourageous, too evidently tailored for Met-audience acceptance. In a way, "The Ghosts of Versailles," like Hoffman's imagined films, is a remake of familiar, approved material. It could even be deplored for reinforcing Met-audience notions of what "opera" should be. There were some cheap, obvious jokes: Figaro as dancing girl made lewd play with a banana; a Valkyrie strode on to cry "This is not opera!! Wagner is opera!"; a quartet of aristocrats sang "Another evening at the opera . . . I'm so bored, bored, bored." The score, the plot, and (as perhaps the quotations show) the diction would have benefitted from some keen editing. There was too much slow, scarce-pulsed music. Nevertheless, "The Ghosts of Versailles" was an uncommonly capable first opera—and a hit.

Mr. Levine himself conducted, and his company paraded an accomplished, spirited cast, led by the Marie Antoinette of Teresa Stratas. Her lower voice has faded, but the top is still full, and she is a potent artist, who did much to second Mr. Graham's spiritual view of the opera. Gino Quilico (whose father, Louis Quilico, sang the Count in Milhaud's "Mère Coupable") was a dapper Figaro. Håkan Hagegård was an earnest Beaumarchais. I have mentioned Miss Horne; the other principals were Renée Fleming (the Countess), Judith Christin (Susanna), Stella Zambalis (Cherubino), Tracy Dahl (Florestine), Graham Clark (Bégearss), Wilbur Pauley (his servant, Wilhelm), Peter Kazaras (the Count), and Neil Rosenshein (Léon). Mr. Graham and John Conklin, the designer, produced a flow of effortless, unstinted, imaginative spectacle.

—ANDREW PORTER

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

Smoke and Mirrors

OLIVER STONE'S "JFK" is a movie with a mission: it means to demonstrate that the assassination of John F. Kennedy, in Dallas in 1963, was not the act of a disturbed Marxist loner named Lee Harvey Oswald but the result of a vast, complex right-wing conspiracy that involved (at the very least) members of the intelligence community and the defense establishment. According to the movie, this wide-ranging plot to kill the President was developed primarily in response to a White House decision to withdraw some advisers from Vietnam. Stone and Zachary Sklar, who collaborated on the screenplay, tell us that Kennedy was committed to making sweeping changes in United States foreign policy: he meant to get us out of Southeast Asia, to rein in the covert activities of the Central Intelligence Agency, and, ultimately, to end the Cold War altogether. What happened in Dallas was therefore (in Stone's view) more than a murder: it was a coup d'état. And the movie thus purports to provide not only a solution to the specific mystery of who killed John Kennedy but also a key to unlock the secrets of every political crime in the past twenty-eight years of American history. Since the narrative of "JFK" is organized around the investigation conducted by the New Orleans District Attorney, Jim Garrison, between 1966 and 1969, the events that the movie can cite as "evidence" of the continuing effects of the coup are necessarily limited—to the escalation of the Vietnam War under L.B.J. and the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. But Stone's interpretation of history is clearly intended to supply a framework for understanding the major scandals and outrages of the seventies and the eighties, too: Watergate, Iran-Contra, the alleged "October surprise" deal—Stone has mentioned them all in the many interviews he has given to promote this picture. His success in putting over the grand, vague conspiracy theory proposed in "JFK" depends, of course, on his ability to tap into the audience's inherent distrust of the powers that be—its sense that the government officials, military brass, and covert-action cowboys fingered here are the sort of people who are capable of the most heinous crimes, the most devious cover-ups, the most arrogant contempt for the democratic process. Since our direst suspicions about the way the government operates frequently turn out to be justified, Stone knows that in 1992 very few members of the audience are likely to reject his conspiracy scenario out of hand. The assassination could have happened the way "JFK" says it did, and for this filmmaker "could have" is good enough. Platoon leader Stone carries out his mission here with his characteristic indifference to intellectual niceties. "JFK" is a guerrilla raid on our sensibilities. Stone doesn't bother to try to win the hearts and minds of the audience with coherent, rational argument; he simply takes them prisoner.

According to Gallup-poll results included in the press materials for "JFK," only sixteen per cent of the American people now believe that Oswald acted alone; seventy-three per cent endorse the view that "others were involved." Among the majority there are presumably some who subscribe to the idea that Oswald didn't fire even a single shot on November 22, 1963, either at the President or at the Dallas police officer who was killed a mile from the suspect's rooming house less than an hour later. "JFK" accepts this thesis: that the alleged assassin was, as he loudly proclaimed after he was arrested, "a patsy," someone set up to take the fall for the real murderers. That's far from a new theory. It's just one of many variations that can be found in the hundreds of volumes of research and speculation produced over the years by students of the assassination. Nearly three decades of mostly independent, non-official examination of the event have turned up virtually no answers: the researchers all agree that the inquiry conducted by the government-appointed Warren Commission (which concluded that Oswald was the sole culprit) was deeply flawed, but, once past that common starting point, they scatter, each heading off in a different direction and no two ending up in exactly the same place.

The whole assassination-theory field is a nightmare of ambiguity and con-

"Some people, Remson, are born to push the envelope, and some are born to lick it."

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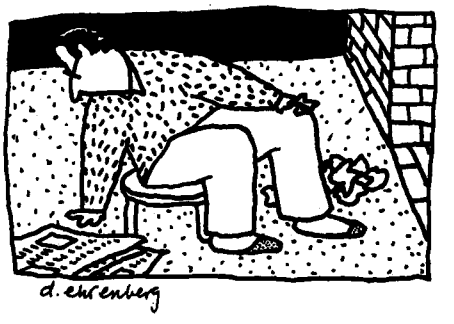
tradiction. If you don't accept the Warren Commission's findings—and there are plenty of good reasons not to—you're still in the dark. The case for Oswald as lone-wolf killer is far from airtight, but no one has yet managed to construct a chain of evidence that leads inevitably to a more satisfying solution. There are plausible conspiracy theories implicating the C.I.A., the Mafia, military intelligence, anti-Castro Cuban exiles, and mix-and-match combinations thereof (sometimes with Oswald as triggerman, sometimes without). No one, though, can honestly claim to have the goods, the hard data that make sense of everything. The information necessary to arrive at the truth always proves to be incomplete; every case, no matter how persuasively argued, collapses for lack of some crucial piece of evidence. Even the forensic data are maddeningly inconclusive. The Dallas doctors and nurses who examined Kennedy's body immediately after the shooting reported seeing a massive exit wound in the back of the head, but the report of the official autopsy, performed later that day in Bethesda, Maryland, places the exit wound in the right temple; the discrepancy is irresolvable, because the President's brain, which was supposedly preserved for further research in the National Archives, has been missing since at least 1966.

In the late seventies, a House committee probing the assassination seemed to have—at last—discovered irrefutable proof that not all the shots fired at J.F.K. came from the direction of the Texas School Book Depository, where Oswald worked. Experts in acoustics, studying the recording of a police-radio transmission which was apparently made at the precise time of the shooting, determined that one shot had been fired from a different direction—from the famous Grassy Knoll. A few years after the committee stated its official conclusion, based primarily on the acoustical analysis, that there *was* a conspiracy to kill the President, this evidence, too, began to look shaky: closer study of the tape revealed the voice of a sheriff giving an order that was in fact issued after the shooting, not during it, so the sounds that the experts identified as gunfire could have been bursts of static. In the Kennedy-assassination case, nothing is solid, no one can be relied on: whatever looks like part of the solution always turns out, sooner or later, to be part of the problem.

Delving into the literature of the Kennedy assassination can be an unhinging, vertigo-inducing experience. Every conspiracy book should bear the legend "Abandon all hope." To maintain sanity in this murky underworld, you need a patient, judicious guide—someone like the British journalist Anthony Summers, whose 1980 book "Conspiracy" (revised and updated in 1989) is a thorough, sober, clear-eyed evaluation of the available evidence. Oliver Stone, with his overheated temperament and his propulsive, cut-to-the-chase filmmaking style, is not ideally suited for that role. "JFK" is more than three hours long, and it packs in an extraordinary amount of assassination lore: the motorcade route, the geography of Dealey Plaza, mock newsreel footage of eyewitness testimony to the shooting, portraits of suspected associates of Oswald, a graphic (and tasteless) reconstruction of the Bethesda autopsy, and a frame-by-frame analysis of the Zapruder film—the home movie, filmed by an onlooker in Dealey Plaza, that is the most detailed visual record of the killing. As if all these data weren't enough for us to assimilate, the movie adds a ton of speculative material about governmental misconduct and quite a few invented (Stone would say "composite") characters; and the whole wrenching spectacle climaxes with a thirty-five-minute courtroom oration by Garrison (Kevin Costner), in which fact, fiction, and ideology are indistinguishable from each other. For all its apparent meticulousness, "JFK" finally seems as muddled and as hastily thrown together as the Warren Commission Report. It's a thick gumbo of truths, half-truths, unverifiable hypotheses, and pure rant, and Stone ladles it out indiscriminately.

I don't think Stone is simply a victim



of assassinationologist's syndrome—the confusion and derangement that overtake even the most sensible people when they pursue this mystery. There are clear indications that the movie's elisions and distortions have been carefully thought out, and that the sensory overload "JFK" produces is a deliberate strategy. The choice of Garrison as hero is significant. The script is based largely on his 1988 chronicle of his investigation, "On the Trail of the Assassins," which is a well-written, exciting book. It's easy to understand why a filmmaker would be attracted to Garrison's story: the District Attorney and his staff tracked down leads and gathered evidence and eventually brought an alleged conspirator—a local businessman named Clay Shaw—to trial. The story has a dramatic shape that is familiar to movie audiences, and a kind of procedural suspense that we're comfortable with. Garrison portrays himself as a lonely fighter against hostile institutional forces—government, the media—that set in motion a well-orchestrated effort to stymie his inquiry. That's a movie-friendly concept, too: the combative D.A. can be seen as a Capra-style populist hero, a champion of the little guy against the big-bully establishment. More specifically, Garrison is the sort of character that Oliver Stone has always been drawn to: tenacious, obsessive, and, let's say, not averse to calling attention to himself. He would be an ideal vehicle for exploring the assassination controversy if it weren't for the embarrassing fact that the case he brought against Shaw was a shambles: the jury reached a "not guilty" verdict in less than an hour of deliberation, and it's almost impossible to find a conspiracy theorist today who thinks that Shaw had anything to do with the assassination.

Garrison tried his case mostly in the press and on television, regularly issuing wild pronouncements about evidence in his possession which would establish beyond doubt the identity of Kennedy's murderers. What he produced in court, however, was skimpy testimony from highly impeachable witnesses. Shamelessly, he turned the paucity of evidence for the conspiracy into evidence of a cover-up, and he wasn't shy (or particularly selective) about assigning blame for the supposed obstruction of his investigation. The

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C.I.A., the Justice Department, and Lyndon Johnson all took their licks from Garrison in the media, and in one televised interview he suggested that Robert Kennedy was working against him, too.

Garrison's contradictory, intemperate, inflammatory public utterances, in fact, lend support to the idea that an institutional campaign to "discredit" him was never necessary: he discredited himself every time he opened his mouth. This blustering, intimidating loose-cannon prosecutor is not the Garrison of "JFK." Stone's Garrison is bespectacled and soft-spoken—a scholarly-looking seeker of truth. But even if you allow Stone the dramatic license of enhancing Garrison's reputation with Kevin Costner's aura of moral authority and regular-guy decency, you have to be suspicious of the way the movie handles the details of the Shaw case. The lengthy, expensive prosecution was a smoke-and-mirrors job, and Stone appears to know it. Garrison's shaky principal witnesses are nowhere to be found in "JFK"; the script replaces them with an invented character (played by Kevin Bacon) who tells a "composite" story that's far more compelling than anything the real Garrison elicited from his real witnesses. That is to say, when Stone comes up against a piece of material that seems inconveniently ambiguous, he fictionalizes it. Cutting a few corners here and a few more there, airbrushing the flaws in his hero's character, coloring in the sketchy outlines of the historical record, he manufactures a collage that tries to pass as a perfect, undoctored photograph of the assassination.

Stone's approach to historical truth is based on some very odd premises. In interviews, he has responded to attacks on the movie's accuracy by saying that his intention in "JFK" is to create a "countermyth" of the assassination—in opposition, that is, to the official myth represented by the Warren Commission's version of events (a myth that nearly three-quarters of the American public doesn't buy, anyway). Another myth is, I should say, pretty much the last thing most of us want from a purported investigation of the J.F.K. murder; in this field we've had a surfeit of myth. Stone has also been saying that he's less interested in the "who" and the "how" of the conspiracy than in the "why"—that the answer to why Kennedy was killed will lead us to the truth about everything else. The most charitable interpretation of that statement is that Stone isn't a rigorous logician: how, exactly, would someone determine why a President was murdered without first knowing who did it and how it was done? You might begin to search for leads in a simple domestic crime on the basis of a hypothesis about motivation, but political assassination presents too wide a range of possibilities: there were plenty of people and groups who hated Kennedy in 1963, all for different reasons. Stone simply selects a "why" that sounds good to him, and he makes a poor choice. Yes, Kennedy had approved an order to withdraw a few American advisers from Vietnam, but there's no evidence that this limited move signalled a fundamental change in Cold War foreign policy, or even, for that matter, in policy specific to Southeast Asia.

In essence, the conspiracy case that Stone makes in "JFK" amounts to a series of inferential leaps proceeding from a speculation. It's all bombast and misdirection, like a courtroom summation by a lawyer who knows that he can't win on the evidence. Stone comes on like a fearless radical, but his attitude toward the audience is firmly in the Hollywood tradition: he tries to bypass the intellect and go straight for the gut. "JFK" has the fevered tone of tabloid television; it plays like an endless episode of "America's Most Wanted." The movie's hysterical manner and its slipshod handling of the facts actually have the effect of diminishing the credibility of the case for conspiracy. The clearest sounds we hear in "JFK" are those of Oliver Stone shooting himself in the foot.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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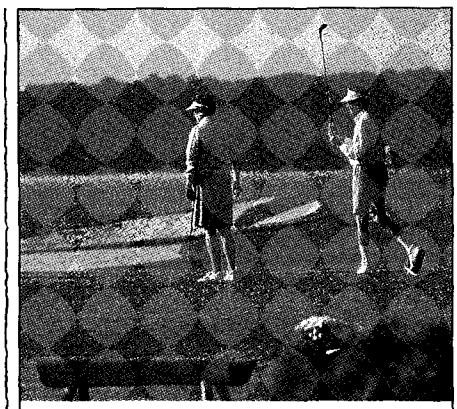
THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

[*From the Jamestown (N.Y.) Post-Journal*]

The Rev. George H. McConnel will continue his sermon series on "The Ten Commandments." His topic will be, "The Jamestown Sewer System—A Sermon on the Ninth Commandment."



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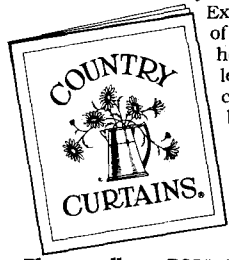

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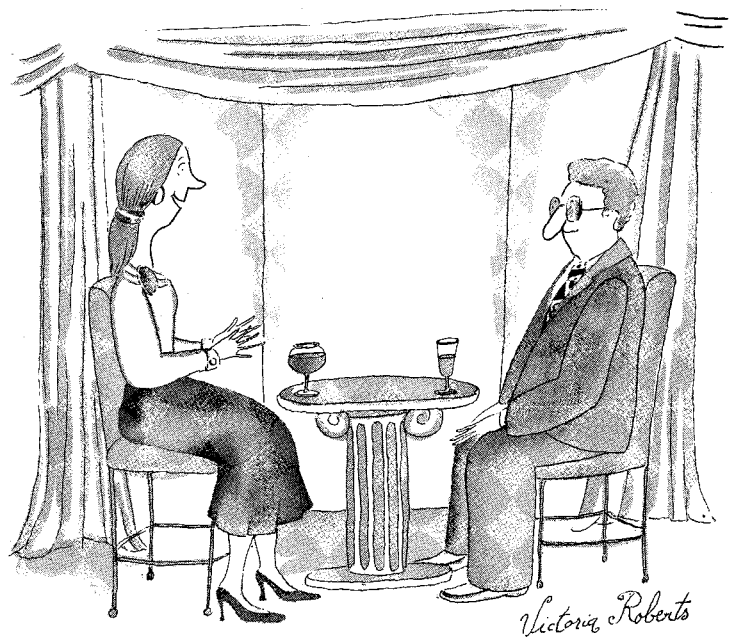
BOOKS

Monkey and Buzzard

THE dust jacket of "Unforgettable: The Life and Mystique of Nat King Cole," by Leslie Gourse (St. Martin's; $22.95), shows the most successful American popular singer of the nineteen-fifties in a half-length portrait: his hands are clasped; he is characteristically immaculate, in a narrowly tailored suit and striped tie; and his left eyebrow is arched in wise and gentle amusement. The cover of "*Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness*," by J. Randy Taraborrelli (Birch Lane; $21.95), shows the most successful American popular singer of the nineteen-eighties in extreme closeup: his hair is falling across his face, his gaze is wild (Jackson may have had eyeliner permanently tattooed around his eyes, the author reports), and he is snarling at the camera. There is nothing particularly surprising about either of these images, but, for all their familiarity, they are still a little puzzling. Given the growth in freedoms of all kinds in the decades that separate the two men's careers, one would expect Michael Jackson to have been fulfilled in a way that Nat King Cole could never have been. Cole's story, after all, is that of a largely passive figure who was dragged away from his bebop piano and made to sing "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer"; Jackson's story, on the other hand, is that of an absurdly gifted prodigy who, bit by bit—with a considerable expense of energy, and through an impressive display of stubbornness and determination—took control of his own career, began to write his own material, practically invented a new genre of mass entertainment, and made himself into the most popular performer in the history of American music. Yet it is the older man's progress that seems, on the evidence of these two books, charmed, and the younger one's that seems, on the whole, almost unspeakably sad.

The career of Nathaniel Adams Coles, as Ms. Gourse, a New York writer who has previously published a biography of the singer Joe Williams and a book about other American jazz singers, recounts it in "Unforgettable," can be encapsulated in the history of his nickname. In his early days, when he was a struggling piano player in Chicago and Los Angeles, he was just Nat Cole. Then, as he and his trio settled into various small Los Angeles clubs, he became *King Cole*: the nickname was a lounge-act joke (one club owner actually had him wear a tinsel crown), until, as his reputation as a pianist grew, it became, willy-nilly, an insider's honorific, like Pres or The Hawk. Finally, by the fifties, he was Nat King Cole, as though "King" were a given middle name, intended to perpetuate the aura of gentility that was by then part of Cole's image as a commercial singer. It is this final Cole who dominates the others, and although fans who love the early Cole often argue that the late, commercial Cole is an inauthentic corruption of the real thing, and not worth wasting time on, it is the songs and the style of this Nat King Cole that Americans seem to care for most—so much that they have made an amazing success out of a tribute album of late Cole songs recently recorded by his daughter Natalie. (The album, which includes a spooky, electronically created duet by father and daughter, was the No. 1 album in the country for four weeks, and has sold, in a thin time for the record industry, more than three million copies.)

Nathaniel Coles, it turns out, was not much inclined by temperament or upbringing to be obsessed by authenticity of any kind; according to his biographer, equanimity and adaptability were the cornerstones of his life. Born in 1916—Gourse's date, though other sources prefer 1919—he was the son of a Baptist minister who brought his family north to Chicago from Alabama in the nineteen-twenties. The family was, on both sides, solid and professional, already genteel; the father was an inventive preacher, with an allegorical bent. One of his most memorable sermons related a slightly hard-to-follow fable in which a monkey decides to get where he needs to go by hitching a ride on the back of an ill-natured and unaccommodating buzzard. The buzzard tries to trick the monkey into letting go of his neck, but the monkey is too canny, and ends up telling the buzzard where to go and how to get there. "Straighten up and fly right," he coolly orders the bird. Although Gourse doesn't say so, it isn't hard to figure out which group of Americans the Reverend meant to represent with the image of the stoic and knowing monkey and which with the image of the arrogant and indifferent buzzard. For the son, this sermon turned out to provide words to live by, in several senses.



"That's between me and my vintner."

Cole was a keyboard whiz. As an adolescent, he was already a solid pro, who could sight-read and sing even in difficult, many-flatted keys: he played Earl Hines-like piano in clubs on week nights, and played the organ in his father's church on Sundays. (His father objected when Nat began to ornament the church hymns with Hines' stylings. "Tone it down, son, or take the conse-

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quences," he said. Nat toned it down, and his pattern of divided musical attentions was set.) He admired his charming, confident older brother Eddie, a bass player, and when Nat was only sixteen he organized two musical groups: a big band, called the Rogues of Rhythm, and a small group, called Nat Coles and his Royal Dukes. In a "cutting contest," Nat's teen-age big band went up against Hines' and won, and he was launched as a jazzman.

In 1936, Nat and Eddie found jobs in the house band of a Chicago spot called the Club Panama, and Nat fell in love with Nadine Robinson, a chorus girl there. Nat and Nadine went on the road with a touring company, performing the old Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle musical "Shuffle Along," until the company went broke, in Long Beach. The Los Angeles area in those years was, Gourse relates, a sunny and unthreatening place for a jazzman, and it was there, in the small steak houses and bars and "inns" where the owners liked to have a few musicians playing while the customers ate and drank, that Cole—with Oscar Moore on guitar and Wesley Prince on bass—perfected his sweet, swinging chamber jazz.

Many of the people who knew or heard that first, legendary Cole trio in Los Angeles are still alive, and Gourse seems to have spoken to them all. She is a devoted, ardent, painstaking, and almost completely artless biographer. Her method seems to have been to talk to everybody she could, paraphrase what each person said to her, and then set it down, in a block, wherever it seemed to fit. Though her narrative runs for only two hundred and fifty pages (the book is padded with a thorough but not, in this age of endless CD reissues, completely useful discography), it is broken into thirty chapters, some only four or five pages long. The chapter headings give the flavor of the prose: "Chapter Eleven: 1948—A Year With Nearly Everything"; "Chapter Sixteen: 'Mona Lisa' Ensures a Luxurious Lifestyle for the Coles and Their New Baby, 'Sweetie' "; and (my favorite) "Chapter Twenty-one: Even If You Can Go Home Again, Perhaps You Shouldn't." At times, Gourse's inability to discriminate or to organize her material gives her book an inadvertent poetic quality. An entire, four-page-long chapter—"Chapter Five: Friends Witness the Rise"—is devoted to the memories of a couple of young white kids who happened to do most of their dating in one of the clubs where Cole's trio was playing in the early forties. The couple, John and Jean Kraus, met in April, and so Nat always played "I'll Remember April" for them. One night a woman kept calling out for a song called "Solid Potato Solid"—a novelty number that Nat liked to sing—and Jean recalls how annoyed she was that the woman kept getting the title wrong; Nat didn't mind, though. Eventually, when Nat was becoming a bigger star, they went to hear him play at the Orpheum Theatre and, knowing that they would get to see him backstage at intermission, they both wore new "beige-colored gabardine zoot suits with big shoulders and long jackets," which they had bought at a clothing store, called Devore's, that they knew Nat liked, too. It's not worth a chapter, I suppose, but the shoulders on those beige zoot suits stay with you.

As John and Jean's reminiscences suggest, Nat had already started to sing as well as play piano. No one seems to remember exactly when he began to sing, or to know exactly why, but everyone agrees that in the beginning he didn't like the sound of his own voice, and couldn't understand why anyone else did. You only have to listen to his piano playing to hear why: the singing and the piano playing, even on his best records, seem to be produced by two entirely different people. The piano playing is hot and intense and driven and wide-ranging; all the experts agree that he was not only a great piano player but an avant-garde one—a pioneer of bebop. The singing, by contrast, is relaxed and direct and has only a very narrow range. He must have thought that his singing sounded amateurish, and, in the best sense, it always did; his voice wasn't his real instrument, and therefore he was never much inclined to treat it as a virtuoso one.

Still, people wanted him to sing, so he began to write songs for himself. He faithfully adapted his father's monkey-and-buzzard sermon into a song called "Straighten Up and Fly Right." When he sang it, though, it sounded so much like a jive insider's song that no one grasped its impec-

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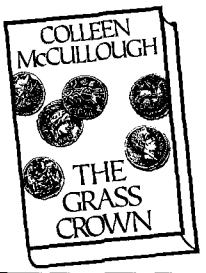

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

cable, upright moral. When Cole played it for Lucille Ball, who was thinking of using the trio in a movie, Lucy recoiled, announcing, "That's the filthiest song I ever heard in my life." Gourse explains that "in her mind, the monkey was urging the buzzard . . . to have an erection." (I feel for Lucy; before reading Gourse, I had always thought that the song was about a drug addict, and that the monkey was the bad guy and the buzzard the hero.) The lyricist Johnny Mercer heard the trio play, and in 1943 he asked Cole to record for a small new pop label he was starting up—Capitol Records. Improbably, "Straighten Up and Fly Right," one of the first songs the trio recorded, became a big hit, selling five hundred thousand copies.

"Straighten Up and Fly Right" launched the series of magical records that the Cole trio made during the next five years. Just listing the titles of these records may give some sense of their slangy, loose-limbed, shadowless charm: "The Frim Fram Sauce," "Loan Me Two Till Tuesday," "But She's My Buddy's Chick," "I'm an Errand Boy for Rhythm," "Save the Bones for Henry Jones ('Cause Henry Don't Eat No Meat)," "You Don't Learn That in School," "Ke Mo Ky Mo," "I Think You Get What I Mean." None of them were standards; as songs, they make the Tin Pan Alley material Billie Holiday sang look like "Die Winterreise." But their modesty is what makes them work. Some of the best of these records, Gourse reveals, were originally intended for children; Capitol had had a lot of success making kids' records, and Cole was enlisted to make some more. But pretty soon some of the records for kids crossed over to the grownup market, and in the reissues the children's nonsense records are indistinguishable from the jive songs meant for grownups; the kids' songs sound like love songs, just as in more conventional love songs Cole sounds as though he might be singing to a particularly winning child.

The trio's records also endure as a memorial to a passing ideal of hipness that was uniquely allied to charm. Their magic lies not just in Cole's vibrato and phrasing and ease but in the impression he creates of being someone who is entirely with-it and yet chooses to be warm. The two opposites of American pop culture as it developed over the next fifteen or so

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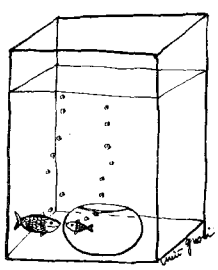
years—hipness and warmth—are in harmony in the trio's records. The hipness eventually turned into either the intimidating frostiness and churchiness of bebop and its successors or the coarse clubbiness of Sinatra. The warmth, on the other hand, which originated with Crosby and Astaire, and which Cole learned in part from them, soon became a simple racket, the saccharine pleasingness of the Hit Parade.

Gourse notes that for most of the late forties and early fifties Capitol, and the times, allowed Cole to work in several genres, and in several different spirits, at once. In 1946, Mel Tormé approached him with "The Christmas Song," and, after the trio re-recorded the tune backed with a string arrangement, it became a crossover hit. But from 1944 through 1947 Cole also topped the *Down Beat* poll for his work with the trio; he was, Gourse points out, still seen as a jazz-piano player who happened to have a nice, profitable sideline in hit songs. He might have ended up like Joe Williams or like Tormé himself—a jazz performer with a pop following, moving back into jazz as the growth of rock altered the pop audience—if it hadn't been for a sequence of events even more improbable than the ones that produced "Straighten Up and Fly Right." In the nineteen-thirties, a composer named Herman Yablokoff, working in the dying Yiddish musical theatre in New York, wrote a minor-key tune called "Shvayg Mayn Harts" ("Hush My Heart") for a musical called "Papirosn." A young New York songwriter named Eden Ahbez heard the song and thought, mistakenly, that it was an old Yiddish folk tune. Ahbez went out to California, became a kind of proto-hippie (long hair, sandals, health food), gave the tune a truly ridiculous set of words, and called his new song "Nature Boy." He slipped the song to Cole, who was recording just about everything in that period, and although Cole's producers didn't much like the song, Capitol wearily stuck "Nature Boy" on the B-side of a song called "Lost April." Released in the spring of 1948, "Nature Boy" became a phenomenal hit, selling nearly two million copies.



After that, Cole was almost exclusively a pop singer, whose only rival throughout the nineteen-fifties was Sinatra. The trio soon broke up, and Cole's piano playing became a "specialty," like W. C. Fields' juggling—he would play one piano number in every show. For the next seventeen years, he spent his time recording, among much else, three albums of Spanish music ("Cole Español"), two albums with the Basie band, an album of blues, most of the score of "My Fair Lady," an album of country tunes, an album of gospel songs, an album featuring songs from the turn of the century ("In the Good Old Summertime," "The Sidewalks of New York"), and endless pop songs—some of them standards, and terrific, but most of them pretty ordinary fifties pop.

It is these records that made him beloved, however, and some people cannot forgive him for them. Even Gourse, a true fan, is a little apologetic. When we listen to old records that are, in some respects, as intensely of their period as these, it's hard to know for sure whether we are responding to the record or to the period: we carry on about phrasing and vibrato, while what we are hearing is those glasses clinking on tables at the Sands in 1960. But there are many things to be said in the records' defense. For one thing, a lot of very good music is mixed up with the bad, and the best of it is not necessarily the most "swinging," or jazz-inspired. Cole's best singing had almost never been in straight blues or swing anyway; when he sang with the Basie band, he was reclaiming roots that were not quite his to begin with. He did his most memorable singing in the fifties in the nicest and most inconsequential-seeming pop hits of the era—in songs that were a kind of grown-up, more "sophisticated" variety of those nonsense children's songs. From 1950 on, Cole is square, but he is also aristocratic. He is the least dramatic of good singers. His emphases fall neatly on the rhymes, and he gets his effects, like a storyteller, mostly by raising and lowering his voice—narrating the song rather than acting it out.

The obvious comparison for Cole's Capitol records of the fifties is the big-concept albums that Sinatra was doing for the same label at the same time

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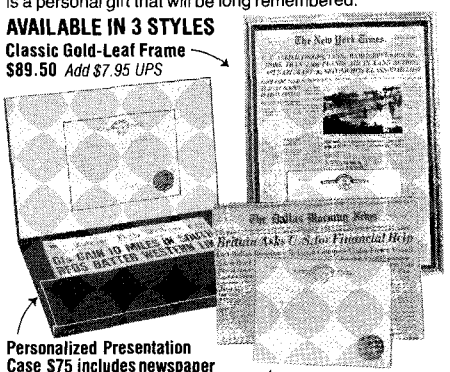
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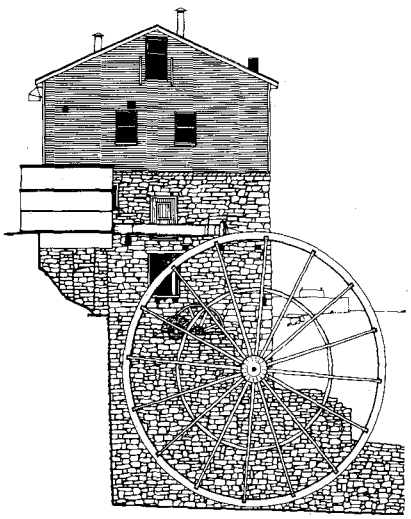

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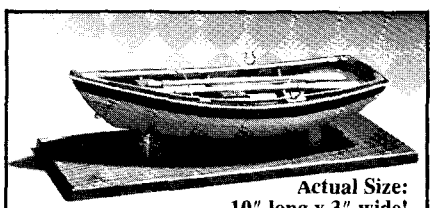

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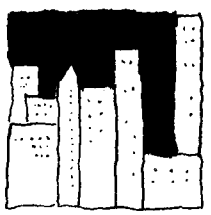
(and often with the same arranger, Nelson Riddle). It's true that Cole never did anything as concentrated, or as affecting, as "Only the Lonely," but then Cole never sang "French Foreign Legion," either. Sinatra is, as Cole never was, a superb actor, on records and off, and when the song is good he can do sublime things with it; when it isn't, he touches the edge of kitsch, and sometimes falls right in. Cole seems to me at his most wonderful not in his big-band records but in his most straightforward ballad singing. Maybe the best thing he did during the fifties was his version of Hoagy Carmichael's "Star Dust," in which he almost chants the long and usually overlooked verse. Cole is oddly good at European songs, too—at the Charles Trenet song that became "I Wish You Love," for example, and at ballads like "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square." (He recorded this last song at about the same time that Tormé and Sinatra did. When Tormé sings it, you notice the singer; when Sinatra sings it, you see the girl; when Cole sings it, you hear the nightingale.)



The other thing to be said in Cole's defense is that he knew exactly what he was doing, and chose to do it. Cole compartmentalized his talents instead of surrendering them—a different thing. In 1956, he revived the trio just long enough to make a single, perfect album, "After Midnight," and one of the interesting things about that album is the degree to which, returning to his "high style," he could also draw on what was strongest in his commercial style. There hadn't been many straight ballads on the trio's earlier records—what people wanted were funny songs and "swinging" songs—but on "After Midnight" Cole sings a single straight ballad, Oscar Levant's "Blame It on My Youth," and makes it heartbreakingly beautiful; one wonders if its depth and purity don't come directly out of Cole's experience of having to find a decent way to sing "Tenderly" and "Answer Me, My Love" and "Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup."

And, besides, what was he supposed to do? Starve, so that his jazz fans could bask in a reflected purity? "Do you want me to end up as Bud Powell?" he once, uncharacteristically, snapped at someone who reproached him for giving up the piano. (Oscar Moore, the brilliant original guitarist of the trio, spent some time after the breakup working as a bricklayer.) For some reason, the scrutiny of popular music has become one of the last resorts of the puritanical imagination in America. We scour the lives of singers and pop musicians for signs of a purity of vocation that would be difficult to find among Shaker furniture-makers, and demand a lack of ambiguity and compromise in the lives of our entertainers which we cannot find in our own ambiguous and compromised lives.

And one can't help wondering whether the ideal of purity and noncommercialized authenticity is, in any case, not only an implausibly high ideal but also a white folks' imposition—one that betrays the happily heterogeneous nature of what went into Cole's music in the first place. What strikes you throughout Gourse's biography is that the issue of Cole's "sellout" always had much less importance for Cole than it had for everybody else. Cole was brought up in the civilized belief that metropolitan people ought to be able to speak or sing in several dialects—that multilingualism didn't imply insincerity. Cole just sang, and let his audience sort the songs out. From "Nature Boy" on, his life was a round of night-club appearances, TV shows, attempts at film acting (he was no good: the elegance that made him a great singer looked wooden on film), and recording sessions. He divorced Nadine in 1948 and married a singer named Maria Hawkins Ellington (no relation of Duke's, although she sang with his band), by all accounts a powerful and intelligent woman, who protected Cole and made him see that he had become a role model and ought to behave like one. (Their marriage and honeymoon were exhaustively documented in *Ebony;* by the late forties, Cole really had become a kind of king.) They had five children (two were adopted), whom Cole seems to have loved, though he was, understandably, a fairly distant father, spending most of his time on the road.

Two things stand out amid the welter of information that fills Gourse's book. One is how small-time even big show business seems to have been only thirty years ago: Cole's earnings were counted out in thousands of dollars, and at the

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height of his fame he still depended on the money he could make appearing at night clubs. The other, sadder note is the degree of bigotry that even so tranquil and uncontentious a person as Cole had to contend with. His television programs had a hard time keeping sponsors, who were, shamefully, scared away by the fear of losing audiences in the South. After he bought a house in Hancock Park, an all-white neighborhood near Beverly Hills, someone burned the word "nigger" on the lawn, and in the mid-fifties, in Birmingham, Alabama, he was actually attacked on stage by white supremacists as he sang "Little Girl."

For a long time after his death, in 1965, Cole had apparently receded, for good or ill, into his period. Now that the rock-era squabbles have dimmed, though, it seems possible that the Great Divide that supposedly separates pre-1956 American popular music from what came after will turn out to be, like most such historical barriers, far more permeable than it once seemed. It was Chuck Berry, after all, who said that if he could hear only one artist for the rest of his life it would be Nat Cole; you can certainly hear a lot more of the jiving, witty, trio-era Cole echoing in Berry's best songs than you can hear of, say, Delta blues. And now the world and its music have spun around more times than one can count, and Cole is back, a hit again, evergreen, singing with his daughter—not a bad record, either, though she is not her dad. Sinatra singing with his daughter sounded alarming—too much. Cole still sounds fine. He entered the mire of the world, worked as hard as he was able, and emerged with his family and his honor more or less intact, and here he is today, in a music video, giving a boost to his kid's career, still self-effacing and immaculate, even as a ghost.

WHAT makes Natalie Cole's record somewhat unsettling is her need to ornament her dad's records with a lot of overt "emotion," when the whole point of his style was that you got true emotion by seeming to suppress it. What intercedes between Natalie and her father is the triumph of what came to be called "soul" singing, whose high-keyed expressiveness Natalie takes, unself-consciously, as a model for all singing—for what singing *is*. Yet for an earlier generation of

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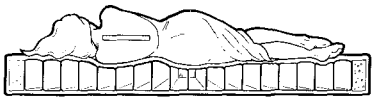

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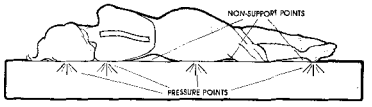

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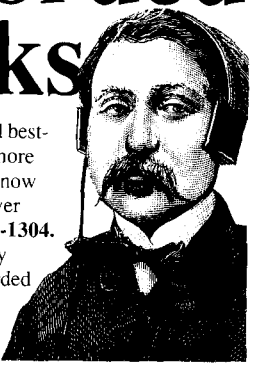

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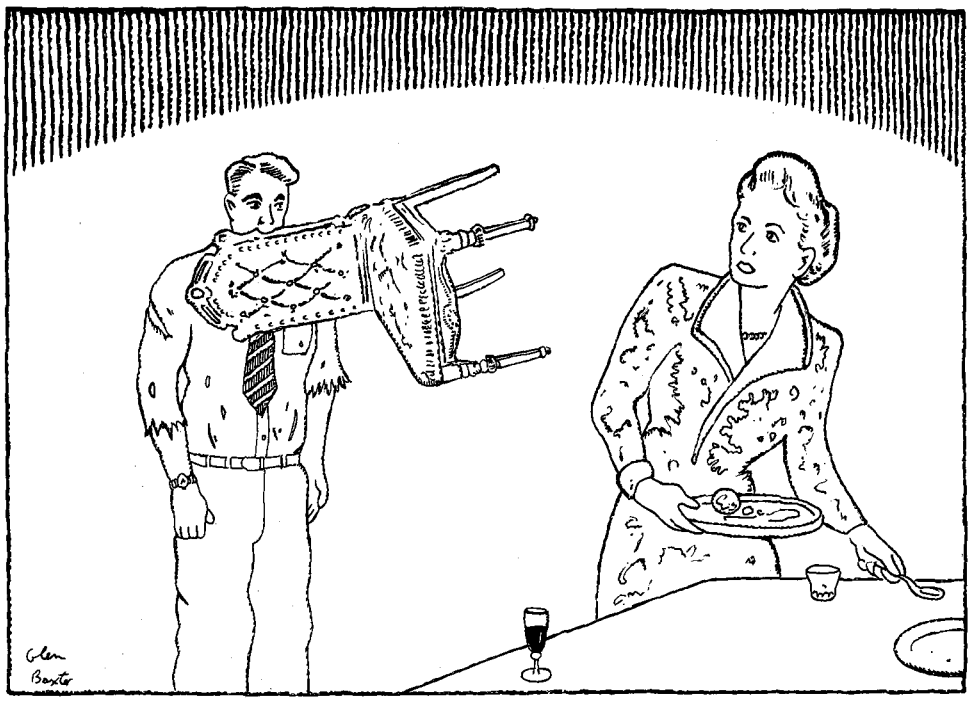

"FEELING PECKISH AGAIN, DEAR?" MURMURED MIRIAM.

• •

American soul singers Nat Cole's commercial, "compromised" sound had remained in memory as the beau ideal of a high, dignified, unclownish style. (Marvin Gaye struggled all through his career to be allowed to release standards sung in a pastiche of Cole's late style.)

Cole's name does not appear in the index of "Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness," however, while among the older singers whose names appear there most often are James Brown and Sammy Davis, Jr. It's a juxtaposition that, all by itself, pretty much describes Jackson's style—Brown's soulfulness combined with Davis's show-biz savvy. Taraborrelli's book is a funny hybrid—in part a standard "unauthorized" celebrity biography, full of dubious secondhand reports of sordid goings on in the Jackson family (in which Michael is as much bewildered and pained spectator as participant), and in part a cool and surprisingly interesting corporate history of Jackson and his family. Ironically, it is this corporate history that has got Taraborrelli into hot water. The Jackson family, though they are portrayed as a loutish bunch, have left him alone, but their old nemesis Berry Gordy, the head of Motown, has launched a lawsuit.

Jackson's story is, in any case, mostly a business story; as biography it is unrelievedly grim. His father, Joe, was a brutal, abusive patriarch; his mother a weak, devoted Jehovah's Witness. Bringing up a big family in Gary, Indiana, in the sixties, they thought that they could make some money by turning five of their six sons into a singing act. According to Taraborrelli, the Jackson children didn't sing in church, or even on street corners; they were taught to mimic hit records as exactly as they could. Joe discovered that while the older boys were neither better nor worse at this kind of mimicry than anybody else's kids, the youngest, Michael, was eerily gifted at it. Very quickly, the Jacksons went from singing at supermarkets in Gary to auditioning for Berry Gordy, who signed them at once.

Taraborrelli is convincing on the situation at Motown in the early seventies—a time when its golden Detroit period was just behind it, and Gordy, having moved the company to Los Angeles, was seeking to exploit one or two major stars instead of continuing to work the stable of street kids who had made the company in the sixties. A performer as conventionally talented, and as polished, as Michael Jackson was a gift from heaven to Gordy at that moment. Yet the reader is struck, above all, by how old-fashioned, how Hollywood-forties, Gordy's treatment of his stars remained in the late sixties. At a time when rock stars were almost obliged to take drugs, preach revolution, and pose naked for album covers, he was still arranging to have the Jackson boys "discovered" by Diana Ross, fabricating their interviews, and changing their birth dates; he gave them the M-G-M works. Gordy even insisted that Motown have the right to respond to the Jackson fan mail "with any answers the company deems necessary," and the right to replace any Jackson brother, at any time it chose, with an ersatz, manufactured Jackson. It's hard to tell whether all this was a shrewd business decision by Gordy—who may have thought that his audience was younger and more conservative than the rock audience—or a foolish and naïve one, originating in Gordy's fantasies of moguldom rather than in his superior commercial sense. The wholesome image that Gordy created certainly worked for the Jacksons for a time, but Michael Jackson soon saw that there was something limiting in it, and his career to a large degree turns out to be the story of his exchanging the straitjacket of conventional Motown stardom for the rougher, more disturbing, and more contentious image of a rock performer.

According to Taraborrelli, at least some of Jackson's reputation for "madness" is the result of a series of highly self-conscious devices that Jackson designed in order to promote this other image. Most of his more bizarre eccentricities—the offer to buy the Elephant Man's bones, the photographs of Michael in the hyperbaric chamber—seem to be out-and-out publicity stunts, interesting only for their oddly crude and almost nineteenth-century, P. T. Barnum hokiness. The genuine eccentricities—the compulsive plastic surgery, the isolation, the obsession with children and childhood—seem, by contrast, like understandable, if sad and unresourceful, responses to an impossible situation. If you are a young boy with a brutal father, a weak mother, a handful of older brothers who recognize you as their meal ticket and resent you accordingly, and taunt you by calling you Big Nose and Liver Lips, all in the midst of a success so

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large and incomprehensible that it feels as baffling as failure, what do you do? You can change your nose, change the lips, escape from your father, try to recreate some semblance of the childhood you missed. This may not be the most "mature," or grown-up, way of handling the situation, but then acting maturely involves in large part recognizing that, like it or not, there are other egos in the world that restrict the action of your own, and that you profit more from recognizing this fact than from denying it. If there are, effectively, no restrictions on your desires—if you are rich and powerful enough to keep all the other egos at bay—it is not clear how much you profit from maturity.

Even the isolation that Jackson has imposed on himself is, in its sad way, comprehensible. We take it for granted that any kind of fame, for all its disagreeable rough edges, is still intrinsically enjoyable. But the scale of Jackson's fame is so immense that it seems to have denied him any imaginative conception of his fans except as a huge and threatening and hostile mass, enlivened by a few psychopaths. There was no point in Michael Jackson's career when he was singing "I'll Remember April" or "Solid Potato Solid" to a pair of lovers. It is perhaps no accident that almost all the performers who have experienced this phenomenon of hyperfame—Elvis, Dylan, the Beatles—have at one time or another retreated from the world just as decisively as Jackson has, if less luridly.

ON the business side, Taraborrelli suggests, Jackson's musical career can be seen as the outward expression of a series of struggles to control the publishing of his songs. In the old days, Taraborrelli explains, the big money in the record business lay mostly in selling records; music publishing was an ancillary business, dominated by professional songwriters, who made their money from sheet-music sales. But now, through the enormous growth of "secondary" markets for songs—in television commercials, for example, or simply in the continual broadcast of old songs on radio stations—the publisher of a successful song continues to make money long after the original record has stopped selling. It is in the record company's interest, therefore, both to keep the performer from writing his own material and to see to it that the material he uses is published by the company. And if you can't keep the performer from writing his own material, then the thing to do is to get the artist to sell you the publishing rights. Of course, the performer's interest lies in writing his own songs and controlling their publishing. (One of the things that precipitated the Beatles' breakup was the loss of their publishing company.) It was Berry Gordy's bet that the Jackson brothers were not sufficiently talented to write their own material. He was wrong, at least in part—Michael, like Stevie Wonder, who also battled Gordy over publishing rights, turned out to be a superb songwriter—but you can see why Gordy thought that it was bad business to concede this point. Jackson's insistence on making solo records consisting mostly of his own material was, essentially, a gamble on his ability to run a music-publishing company. Not surprisingly, as soon as he had control of his own publishing, the first thing he decided to do was—in a move he had learned from Paul McCartney—to buy up other people's publishing companies, including, eventually, that of the Beatles.

You don't have to be a material determinist to realize that one likely consequence of this system of rewards is to discourage singers from recording old songs. In Nat King Cole's day, it was not commercial folly for a singer who depended on selling records to sing established songs written by other people. Michael Jackson, on the other hand, wants to *own* the Beatles catalogue; he doesn't want to sing it. It is a passive investment: every time someone plays a Beatles song on the radio, Jackson makes a much larger buck than the surviving Beatles themselves do. At the same time, it is in his own commercial interest to write an entirely new group of songs each time he records, to rely on his gifts as a performer and showman to put them over, and then to wait and collect all the secondary money that will continue to flow in from their success.

Taraborrelli's viewpoint throughout is that of a music-industry journalist for whom every record or video or dance move is simply an element in the construction of a commercial property. He is fairly perfunctory about the music itself; he occasionally genuflects to the more "authentic," soulful Jackson songs,

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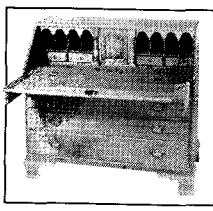

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like "Billie Jean," but fails to consider the possibility that the show-biz, Sammy Davis/Bert Williams side of Jackson may be the most authentic thing about him. It seems—to my ears, anyway—that Jackson is least good when he is being most yelpingly, self-consciously soulful. The "anger" that is the dominant emotion of contemporary popular music is just as rote and stylized as all that warmth was in the fifties, but in Jackson's case it is so transparently rote and stylized that it becomes a little comic, and, besides, it places him in a competition that he cannot hope to win. Not anger but pain seems to be the emotion that Jackson has a real gift for conveying. When he sings "She's Out of My Life" or "Billie Jean," his bewilderment and confusion seem so intense, and so far out of proportion to the cliché lyrics of the first song or the oblique and fragmentary lyrics of the second, that they create a sound and a feeling unlike anything else in popular music—the sound of someone who is genuinely falling apart.

A suitably hard-eyed commentator might point out that how Jackson does or does not sound in any particular song is essentially irrelevant to his place in popular culture, which can be defined only in terms of some underlying social struggle. It might be argued, for instance, that both Cole and Jackson succeeded with a white American audience by de-sexualizing themselves: Cole by becoming everybody's dad, Jackson by becoming neutered or presexual. (Taraborrelli comes close to making this argument about Jackson.) The problem with such analyses is not that they are necessarily false but that they succeed, as much as any show-biz publicity apparatchik ever did, in reducing a human being to a pawn in a game of public images. In Nat King Cole's day, the argument was between insider critics, who cared about music, and a publicity industry that enlisted the performer in a series of staged tableaux illustrating extra-musical themes: Family Man, Credit to His Race, and so on. Today, the competition is strictly about who gets to stage-manage the tableaux. But Jackson owes his allegiance to an older tradition, in which the pitch was meant to draw the customers inside to watch the performance.

For all his attempts to construct a suitably "mad" and sinister character for himself, this old-fashioned, crowd-pleasing, sing-your-heart-out quality of Jackson's may be the single most distinctive thing about him these days. He knows intuitively how to play the game, but he doesn't quite get it; he's a natural at attracting attention, without being particularly shrewd about the *kind* of attention he attracts. Those performers who operate simply by manipulating their image (who engage in a process of perpetual self-invention, as the jargon has it) are as mystifying to Jackson as they would have been to Sammy Davis. Jackson's place in the vaudeville tradition may account for his bemusement, reported by his biographer, at the success of performers like Mick Jagger, who is said to have shocked Jackson once by singing flat when they shared a duet. ("How did *he* ever get to be a star?" Jackson supposedly asked.) For all his recent knocking around with Madonna—a strict alliance of convenience, apparently—he can't figure her out any more than Steve and Eydie can. Jackson is caught uneasily between two kinds of performing—between being the all-out entertainer and being the up-to-date publicity manipulator that the times demand. He is preposterously talented, but that doesn't seem to be enough for anyone anymore.

It is possible, perhaps, to construct a kind of bridge between the business situation that Taraborrelli traces and the curious kind of joylessness that has come over Jackson's singing and performing: its intense hysteria, its divorce from ease of any kind. Compelled by his commercial interests as well as by his sensation-hungry audience to do something more grandiose each time out—to wear a weirder outfit, to come up with a more expensive or more bizarre video—he can't make his music cleverer, or better, or just different; he can't even really make it new. He has the attention, rather than the affection, of his audience, and this imprisons him; if he did something really new, the audience might go somewhere else. He has to get his results from an inflation of effects—bigger, louder, more dazzling, and increasingly empty.

But then most things look shallow to us when they're coming into being. Early Motown looks like a Golden Age now; back in the sixties, most right-thinking people saw it merely as a sellout of true R. & B. All the things that can be said about Michael Jackson's situation—that he is too successful for his own good, that his circumstances have robbed him of any experiences except those to be found in the little world of childhood yearnings and the incomprehensibly big world of the stadium and television—might have been said just as truly of the Beatles. But at least the Beatles had each other—for a while, anyway. What is most disturbing in Taraborrelli's account of Jackson's isolation is not that he is isolated from his fans (why should he want to be near his fans?) but that he is isolated from any kind of community of fellow-performers. When you look at the history of pop music, what you may see is not so much huge outpourings of individual talents, keyed to social ground swells and revolutions, as little in-group competitions that have big results. At Motown in the early days, no one wanted to do anything except turn out hit records, but, as Taraborrelli made plain in his earlier book "Hot Wax, City Cool & Solid Gold," a history of Motown, among the artists themselves there was a clear, shared sense of who was original and talented and who had lucked out.

Maybe the history of all popular art is susceptible to being told as the artist's struggle for two audiences: the competitive, in-group audience, which he is trying to impress, and the large, outside audience, which he is trying to please. When the two groups overlap or are in harmony—when what the out-group wants is to be taken for an in-group—you get things as good as the best records of Motown and Nat King Cole. When the in-group's desire to seal itself off completely from the outside audience begins to take over, you get bebop and other kinds of self-conscious art. When the desire to please is all that's left, what you get is Michael Jackson. —Adam Gopnik

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CLEAR DAYS ON THE ACADEMIC SCENE

[*Message received by campus electronic-mail subscribers at the State University of New York at Stony Brook*]

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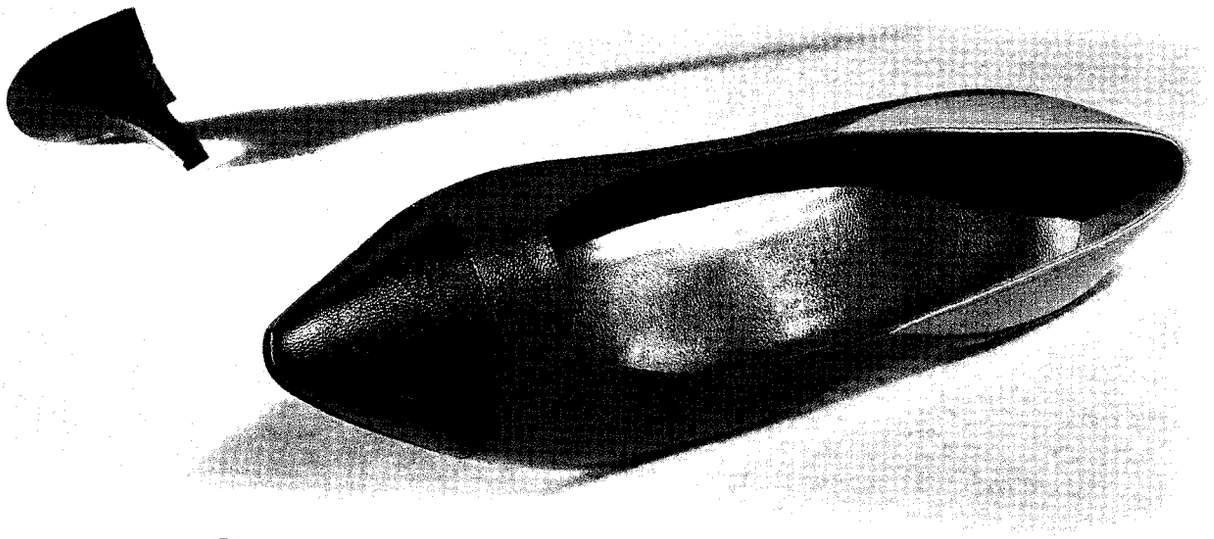

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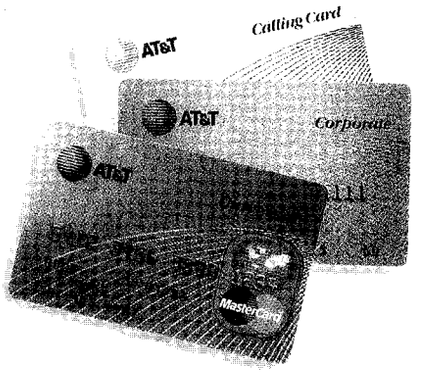

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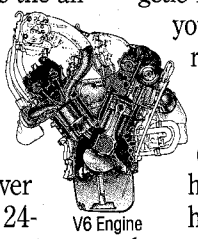
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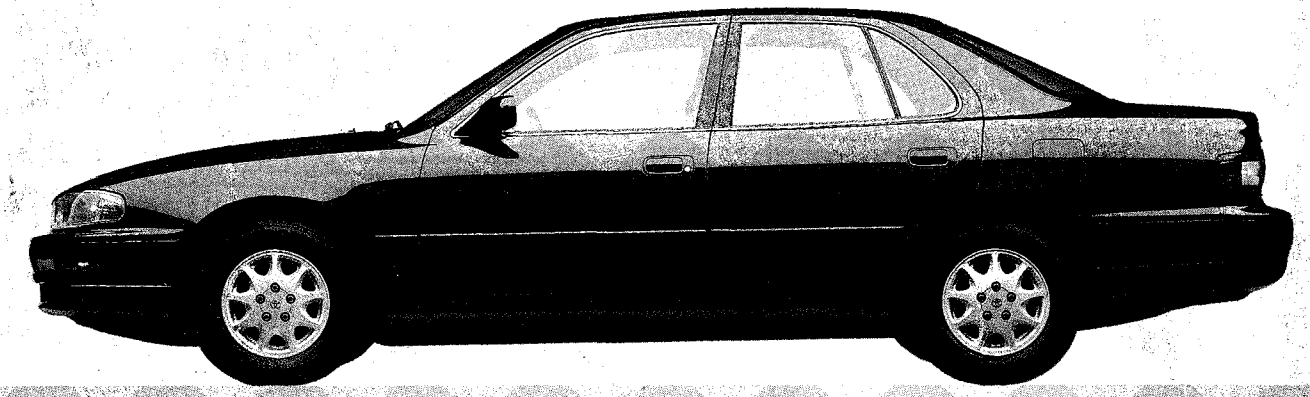

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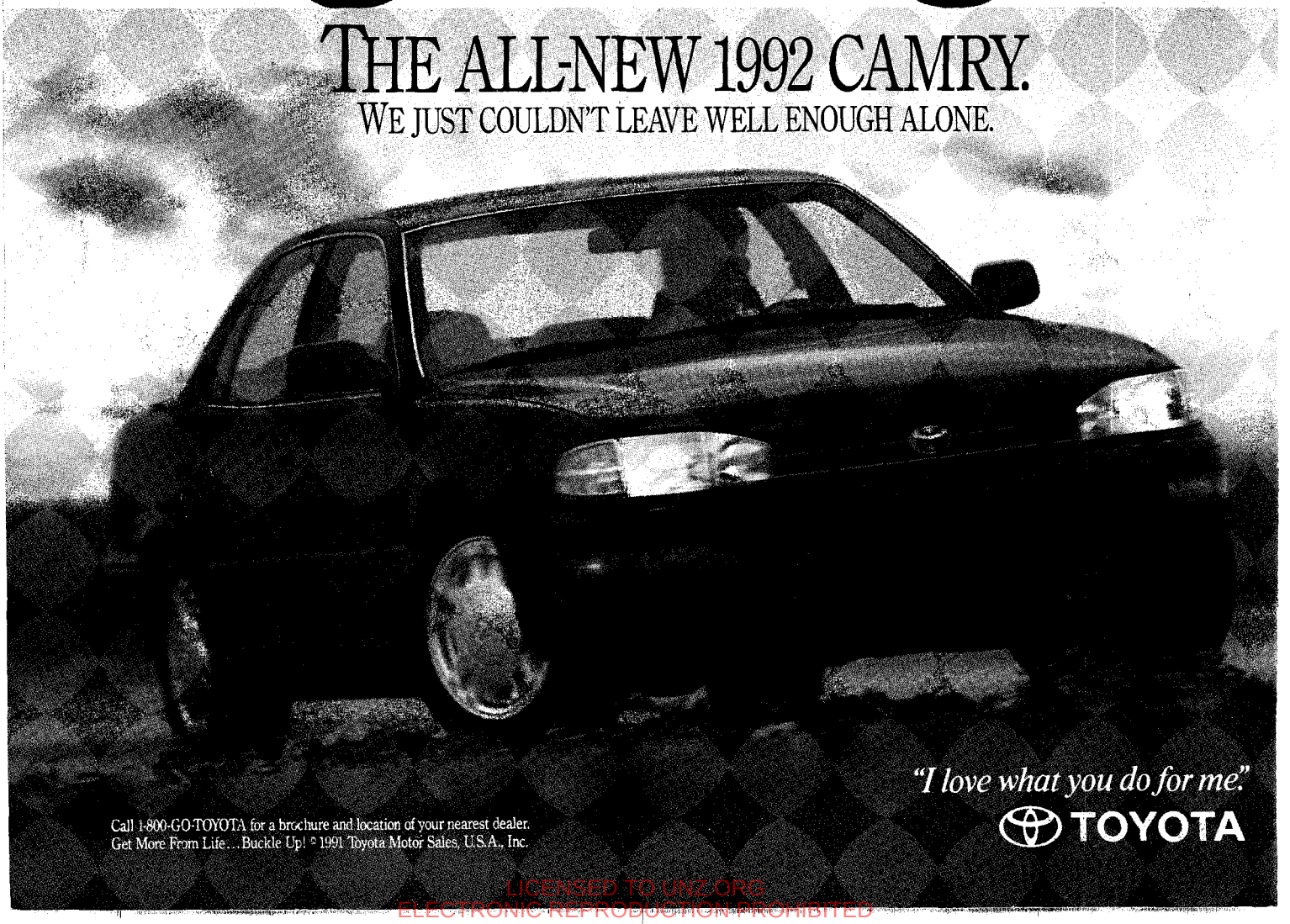

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